

# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter One

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*“Here we are! Born to be Kings, we’re the Prince’s of the Universe.*

*Here we belong! Fighting for survival in a World with the darkest power”*

*~Lyrics by Queen.*

Trowa stood alone on a sandy shore, with his face turned to the wind. The sun was setting over the ocean casting an orange glow across the sky. This was one of the few times he ever felt at peace inside. In quiet moments such as this his violent inner rage dulled to an ache and he could breathe again. The waters were calm and the air was kissing his cheeks with the coming chill of night. He lifted his arms as to embrace the wind, and it twirled around him in a small vortex, shifting his shock of ruddy brown hair wildly about his face. He sighed for all that he could call the wind, he could not call to his arms something more solid to grasp onto. That one force in his life that had always tempered the raging storm inside his being, the one person that had always been there to comfort and calm him in a time of need and desperation, when he had been lost in that whirlwind that was his creation. That had been taken from him a very long time ago, and was unlikely ever to return.

The fire’s a hate flickered to life within Trowa’s breast and the wind and the waves echoed and answered Trowa’s will. He remembered all too well the day he had lost what he held most precious in all the world, the day he’d moved from Hell into the fires of damnation for all time. Here on the outskirts of humanity, it was commonplace to have slaves. Young boys were a prize possession. For Boys were moldable, they could be built up into workhorses by the time they were men.

Trowa had never known his parents; he had been sold to a slave trader while still a toddler. While some races tended to treat their human slaves with dignity. Oz’rialites we’re cruel. Human were the filth of the Universe in their eyes and Trowa learned at an early age just how cruel they could be. It was while onboard one such slave ship, Trowa had found HIM. Trowa was somewhere between the ages of seven and eight, he was ready for sale in other words and was being transported to a trading market. There he would sit and stagnate until someone came along willing to pay the outrageous price a young boy in his condition was worth.

As usual, Trowa sat alone in a darkened corner brooding. He was just becoming aware he was slightly different from the other slaves. People stayed away from him, the boy who “was touched”. The one who made things move by themselves. It wasn’t that he was making them move he had thought. It’s just the breeze. Little did he know then it was the wind answering his weak childhood calls. He had no idea then, just how this power was going to affect the rest of his life. But one person had.

Trowa was in his little corner making the debris and filth circle around in lazy patterns when that heavenly voice had interrupted his thoughts. He had looked up into eyes too wise to be those of a six year old. “It’s a breeze now. Be careful of the storm on the horizon.” The blonde boy almost sang in a breathy whisper. He laid his hand on Trowa’s and smiled.

Trowa remembered gasping for breath from the shock that smile and that touch sent through him. Who was this boy? He didn't care, he felt good, really good. Like life itself was dancing for joy throughout his veins like blood. For the first, and nearly the last time. Trowa smiled back. "You're sad, and outcast. Me too. My name's Quatre. You're Trowa right?" The boy asked sitting down beside the slightly larger boy.

"How did you know?" Trowa had asked jaw agape. Quatre sighed.

"I know lots of things I wish I didn't. I know how you feel, about being different. I feel the same way." Quatre had said in return, his eyes misting over and shining with near tears. "I feel lots of things, mostly bad things. This whole cargo hold is full of anger and sadness. But yours was the strongest. And well, you were thinking about dark things. You shouldn't be so angry Trowa. I know being a slave is not what we were born to be. But here we are. All we can do is try to fit in as best we can and keep our eyes open for a way out. You will get out; you're strong, really strong. I can see your aura; it's almost too bright to look at. Don't let the Oz'rialites know you have that kind of power inside you, they'll kill you." Quatre had said the tears streaming down his cheeks now. "My sister Iria had a marvelous aura. She could make anything feel better and heal almost any wound. When the Oz'rialites found out, they killed her. I've hid mine ever since." Quatre sobbed and Trowa reached over and took Quatre's hand.

"What can you do?" Trowa asked and Quatre shrugged.

"I keep finding new things everyday. But mainly I know how people really feel, not how they tell you they feel. I can hear some people's thoughts, like yours when you're thinking powerful thoughts. Not everything, just the really strong ones. And other stuff I'm still trying to figure out myself." Quatre said smiling a little. "Thank you."

"Thank you? For what?" Trowa asked and Quatre giggled.

"Thank you for thinking I'm an angel. I'm not. Just a boy, like you." Quatre said and Trowa smirked.

"Quit reading my mind goof ball." Trowa said nudging Quatre with his elbow and smiling. He couldn't help but like this boy. He felt drawn to him, and totally at ease. His violent tempo of a heartbeat had even slowed to a soft melody just being near the waif of a child beside him. He'd better not call the wind around this boy.

"You might blow me over." Quatre finished Trowa's unspoken thought and Trowa barked a jolt of laughter and shoved Quatre playfully.

"If you don't stop that I will blow you over. Now quit it!" Trowa said smiling and Quatre's musical laughter sent chill

bumps down his spine.

“He’ll huff and he’ll puff and he’ll blow me down. Not much of a threat Mr. Big bad wolf.” Quatre teased

Trowa frowned. “Oh now we’re making jokes at my expense. You’ll pay for that.” Trowa has said turned to grab Quatre who like a flash was up on his feet.

“You gotta catch me first. See I told you not to think so clearly.” Quatre said running in and all out sprint. Trowa growled and hopped to his feet and made chase. When he finally did catch Quatre by virtue of his longer legs and the smaller boy’s stamina giving way he was too tired himself to do much more than collapse after he tackled Quatre to the floor. That was the first time he had ever played and it had felt wonderful. He had drifted to sleep in a heap where they fell; Quatre curled up beside him his blonde hair spilling over Trowa’s arm. It had felt so right to have Quatre by his side, and that’s where he had stayed for far too brief a time.

They had been awakened suddenly by the shuffling of other slaves around them, apparently they had reached their destination and like cattle they were shoved into pens. Quatre’s hand trembled as he grabbed Trowa’s in fear. Trowa snaked his arm around the smaller boys shoulders and held fast so the press of bodies didn’t separate them. By the time they were ushered into “viewing cages” Quatre’s face was flushed. Thankfully they were placed in the same cage and once inside, Quatre nearly fainted. Trowa caught him before he could hit the straw littered floor. “QUATRE!” Trowa cried out seeing now that Quatre’s brow was drenched with sweat.

“It’s okay Trowa, I’ll be alright. It was just too many people touching me, too close. All that fear, that anger. Oh god, I’m gonna be sick.” Quatre said doubling over and loosing what little sustenance he had in his stomach into the small hole in the floor that served as a slave’s privy. Trowa tore part of his wrap and walked over to the basin of water against the back wall. It wasn’t very clean, but it was cool. He dipped the bit of cloth he had in the water then laid it on the back of Quatre’s neck as he suffered horrible dry heaves.

“Just breathe Quatre, we’re alone now, just relax.” Trowa said absently stroking Quatre’s back in a calming gesture. Quatre eased and as he sat back on his heels, Trowa shifted and helped Quatre lie down. “Go to sleep. You look awfully tired.” Trowa said going to re-wet the cloth. This time placing it on Quatre’s brow instead, to cool the heat that flushed the youth’s face. Again that brilliant smile under weary ancient eyes faced him.

“Thank you Trowa. Thank you for caring when you don’t want to. Thank you for being my friend.” Quatre said and Trowa softly smiled back.

“Thank you for being someone I like and for making me feel better. I hate being lonely.” Was Trowa’s response.

“Me too.” Quatre said through a yawn. Trowa just shifted to lie beside Quatre.

“You won’t be lonely anymore Quatre. I’ll stay with you.” Trowa said and Quatre sighed turning into Trowa.

“If only it could last forever.” Were Quatre’s bittersweet words as he fell asleep.

The waves were crashing into the shore now in a fury. The wind was sucking like a vacuum and picking up droplets from the surf and hurling them like daggers harshly into Trowa’s face. He didn’t care. It hurt, but not nearly so much as not having Quatre did. “If only it could last forever. You knew then didn’t you Quatre? You knew and spared me the knowledge so I could be happy. You should have told me! I would have made the time we did have better.” Trowa sobbed as his knees gave way and scraped themselves on the rocks as Trowa collapsed where he stood. Quatre’s name was ripped from Trowa’s throat by the wind answering the storm in Trowa’s heart. The painful memories whipping the elements with the agony they stirred within Trowa’s breast.

Five months, five months of bliss in seventeen years. That was all he had, that was all the time he had with the boy who nurtured his soul. What had then been the bonds of friendship, Trowa knew now as a burning love that would never be realized. With every year that past, the longing for Quatre grew stronger, burrowing deeper into Trowa’s core. Dreams of Quatre in his arms reminded him of how right he had felt there. With age came realization. He had needed Quatre as a friend, but his soul needed more. Age had brought on new needs; needs he knew could only be fulfilled by Quatre. Clarity and awareness clawed at Trowa’s broken heart. The loneliness was a void swallowing him whole. That void began the day the man with the silver nose plate came and ripped Trowa away from that comfort zone named Quatre.

Taken and raised as a weapon. For the old man saw within Trowa that spark he was trying to hide. Since that day, Trowa had been trained to fight. “For humanity’s sake” as Trowa had been told. He should use his powers; hone them into a deadly skill. “For one day you will rise above the Oz’rialites and crush their empire. It is your calling.” The Professor would tell him. Trowa trained, but not for humanities sake. But for selfish reasons. What had humanity done for him? Nothing but Quatre had done something, and it was for Quatre Trowa carried on. Ever reaching for the day that would bring him one step closer to getting his soul back from the boy, now young man. Who still held it within his grasp.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Two

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*“Born to be Kings, Prince’s of the Universe. Fighting and free. We’ve got the world in our hands, I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand...”*

*~Lyrics by Queen.*

Professor or Doctor “S” as he was known frowned at his protégé. No matter how dutifully Trowa trained, that black cloud never lifted from his demeanor. Trying to pry information out of him as to why he acted so cold was like trying to dive through a brick wall. If Trowa was anything, he was highly guarded. Not even men he trusted knew just what the young man who controlled hurricanes and nature’s wrath felt inside. He was an unemotional, unreadable shell of a man. It was as if he had no soul, as he blindly walked through his life day after day. Beside Dr. S, a figure sighed.

“He’s remarkable. Yet, dangerous in this state.” The tall Oz’rialite said.

“Only dangerous to those who cross him. He may be violent and filled with rage. But he’d never hurt an innocent. Threaten them yes, but actually follow through with the deed, never. Even he isn’t that cold hearted.” Dr. S said and his companion nodded.

“I trust your judgment, you do know him better than I old friend. Is he ready?” the Oz’rialite asked and Dr. S nodded an affirmative.

“That’s good to hear. I’ve gotten word from Zechs, it seems we need to bring the other’s together sooner than planned.” Treize Khushrenada, Imperial senator for the Oz’rialite nation said with a hint of sadness in his voice.

“Why what’s happened Treize?” Dr. S asked concerned.

“It appears the council under Demail uncovered one of our choices. Instructor H’s pupil has been taken into custody. I fear they will torture the lad to gain information. H assures us the boy knows nothing of our plans, but with his gifts, I cannot be certain he does not know the truth for himself already.” Treize said, his shoulders sagging wearily. “The wheels are in motion ahead of schedule, and we must deviate from our original objective. First we must infiltrate and retrieve the lad if we can. Master O, Dr. G and Dr. J are already on the way here with my lady and Mistress Noin. It’s time for Trowa to meet the others, and they him. It’s time we told them the whole truth.” Treize said running a hand through his amber hued hair. “Zechs is on a mission to ascertain the missing lads whereabouts, he’ll contact us as soon as he’s confirmed the location.” Treize finished as he laid his gaze on the wilted young man on the beach.

“That’s all we can do for now I suppose. If Dermal discovers the truth, it’ll be the end for all of us.” Dr. S said and Treize nodded.

“The galaxy is in the grip of a stifling dictatorship. Soon it won’t be just humans fearing their existence, I am ashamed to be an Oz’rialite old friend. I am weary of the looks of hate and fear wherever I go, and I’m sadly in the minority.” Treize said sitting down on a nearby rock and plucking up a blade of grass. “The current senatorial goals frighten me, how much more can they take? Every day another world falls to the hands of my peers and they still reach for more. If we don’t stop them, or rather if those they don’t perceive as a threat stop them, it can only become worse. An Oz’rialite civil war will hardly inspire confidence with the masses. These young humans however will unite the people behind them I have faith in that S. But, am I asking too much of them?” Treize asked and S laid a hand on his shoulder.

“I’d say yes if you were asking them to do it for selfish reasons like political control. But you’re not. You care too much about people sometimes Treize. Believe in your vision like the rest of us do. We all want freedom and peace in our hearts. That’s why we chose to follow you. Don’t give up on us now old friend.” S comforted and Treize gave him a tired smile.

“I won’t give up until I can no longer draw breath.” Treize reassured as the wind began to pick up once more. “A volatile young man indeed S, come let’s distract him with information before we must weather another sudden tempest.” Treize said standing and walking over to one of the young men on whom all his hopes rested.

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Quatre shivered involuntarily inside the dank cell where he awoke, bodily sore and weary. One moment he had been in a study with Instructor H, discussing the day’s lessons, the next moment the gates of hell had flung open. Quatre at nearly 17 was an extremely beautiful and handsome young man, but while strong enough to take care of himself against one other person, having a mob of a dozen Oz’rialite soldiers suddenly attack him, the slight of build young man was beaten senseless in little time at all.

Quatre groaned as muscles protested the movement, but if he stayed on that cold floor much longer he’d not be able to move at all eventually. Quatre licked his dry lips and the taste of blood greeted him, his lip was swollen and cracked. They obviously had continued to beat him after he passed out. He drew his knees up to his chest and buried his face in them. This cell brought back painful memories; he hated being alone more than anything. And being here only served to remind him of another similar cell he had to endure being alone in, his eyes welled with fresh tears as he thought of that other place so long ago.

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He had known from the moment Trowa entered his life he would be forever changed. He knew then it would never last and yet against his better judgment and against his will, he had rejoiced in the fleeting moments of joy Trowa's presence brought to him. How Trowa would shelter him from the onslaught of troubled emotion in his protective embrace. How he would keep the smaller version of himself warm against the chill of the cage with his own body. Oh how Quatre missed those arms, the smell that was Trowa.

Trowa had been his safety net and his friend, his confidant, and the source of his happiest dreams and desires. In his youth it had been the comforting reassurance of a kindred spirit, now as he grew into a man, he realized there was so much more to Trowa only age could comprehend. He was hopelessly in love with a memory, in love with a dream and no matter how hard he tried to forget, he couldn't. No, he wouldn't, Trowa deserved those memories for all that he had done, he deserved to be loved. Even if it was forever to be from afar, Quatre vowed his love would never burn out for the boy he cherished. For the man he would never know. Quatre hugged himself and wept. "I will survive Trowa, I won't let them beat me. I will fight and I will win for you. I promise. All of this I do for the sake of you." Quatre whispered before his sobs robbed him of his voice.

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"I understand." Trowa said to the Tall Oz'rialite who stood before him before turning away from him.

"You understand but will you fight? Will you take back what you deserve? Don't do it for me, do it for yourself." Treize asked and Trowa cast him a glance over his shoulder.

"I don't do this for any of your reasons, nor for myself. I don't care about your corrupt government, nor do I care about humanity. My own parent's sold me into slavery for greed. Humanity can be just as cruel and evil. I do this for the exception to all the rules I've learned and have come to know as bitter truth. I do this for the one person he can't be human, for nothing can be so caring to be anything other than a divine entity. I fight for him, so he can go on making others feel the way he made me feel once. I'd die a thousand deaths to be able to feel that way again. This is why I fight, this is why I will win." Trowa said with conviction and Treize nodded and cast his eyes to the floor. Trowa turned and walked out the door.

"Now I understand. He's rage stems from this, he's lost something he loved very much S. You're right, I'd trust this man with my life. A good soul can never truly be masked by visions of anger or seeming indifference. I pray he finds that source for his inspiration again. It would be a pity for all his efforts to be in vain." Treize said and Dr. S sighed.

"If only life was ever that simple." Dr. S said with a heavy heart as he watched Trowa disappear toward the beach once more. Overhead a shuttle arriving could be heard. "They're here Treize." S said and Treize was already on his feet, and heading for the door.

"Time to gather our soldiers together, the time of change and undoing is at hand." Treize said as he went to greet his

lady and their charges.

Trowa returned to his home to find it overflowing with people. He frowned and stalked to his corner to brood.

A tall boy with an obscenely long braid of hair came sauntering over flopping down beside Trowa on the window seat. He wore a smile and held out his hand. "You must be Trowa. I'm Duo, one God of Death at your service." Duo said grinning. Trowa snorted.

"So you can kill with a look. I've been briefed already." Trowa said ignoring the outstretched hand.

Duo lowered his hand and frowned. "Yes, I can. Man when they said you were moody they meant it. You're worse than Heero of that's possible." Duo said with a smirk, knowing Heero was within earshot.

"I heard that Baka." Heero answered walking over. "Ignore my talkative counterpart, his bite is worse than his bark." Heero said and Trowa looked into deep blue eyes, eyes that held a spark of sadness Trowa was keenly aware was also in his gaze. But the sadness abated when Heero's eyes wandered over to the man next to Trowa and there it was replaced by a softening aura. So these two were lovers, it was somewhat comforting to know at least someone was relatively happy about current circumstances.

Trowa's eyes scanned the others in the room. The others he'd been briefed were supposedly like him. There was Duo who had the power to wilt a man in his tracks by the merest glance. Heero, who despite his wiry frame had the strength and stamina of a team of horses, Wufei, the man who sat off in the corner appearing to meditate was what Dr. S had called a mage, using the power of words and faith to make things happen at his will. Handy Trowa thought to himself as his gaze landed upon the table. His heart stopped and he lunged forward snatching the paper from it and staring at the image upon it. His hand was shaking, those eyes, he'd know those eyes anywhere. The face was older, more beautiful if that was possible, and that smile, oh that smile.

"Where did this come from?" Trowa demanded slamming the paper down on the table in front of Treize.

"From Instructor H, it is his pupil" Treize said and Trowa sank to his knees.

"No, you can't. Tell me you don't want to make this one fight." Trowa said and Treize raised an eyebrow.

"Why Trowa? He among you all is the most powerful." Treize said and Trowa's hand trembled as he clutched the image to his chest.

“Quatre was not meant for fighting.” Trowa whispered and Treize’s eyes went wide.

“You know this lad?” He asked and Trowa looked up and glared at the Oz’rialite.

“More than know. If he gets hurt because of you and your ideals, I’ll kill you myself. He’s the one that’s been captured isn’t he?” Trowa said in a low menacing tone. Treize nodded. “You’d better locate him, then get out of my way.” Trowa said standing up taking the picture with him.

“I think we now know whom it was Trowa lost.” Treize said to S quietly as Trowa stormed out of the room. Outside the find howled and battered against the windows in a fury. The skies opened up and wept.

“Quatre, hold on Quatre I will find you and I won’t let them use you. You were meant to nurture people, not hunt them. You we’re never meant to be a fighter, how dare they force you to be one.” Trowa sobbed as he clutched the image of Quatre to his breast. No one would take him from Trowa a second time, no one not for any reason.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Three

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*"I have inside me blood of kings. I have no rival; no man can be my equal. Take me to the future of your world."*

*~Lyrics by Queen.*

"Man, that Trowa dude is pissed. What set off his trigger?" Duo asked no one in particular as he watched the rain smash against the windowpane of the room he shared with his comrades.

"Are you blind Duo? Can you not see it's the one they call Quatre? It seems you two were not the only ones to find each other as children." Wufei said never opening his eyes where he sat cross-legged on the floor in the corner.

"Well, DUH! I was just wonderin' if it was the same that's all. I'm not THAT dense." Duo said and Heero snorted.

"You can be at times." Heero said and Duo looked affronted.

"Hey, you're supposed to be on MY side here." Duo said and Heero smirked slightly.

"I am ever on your side. Just pointed out a quirk of yours is all." Heero said leaning over Duo's shoulder to peer outside. "But he is really angry about something. Perhaps this goes a bit deeper than they think." Heero said and Wufei joined them at the window.

"I'd wager you're right Heero. But who here braves the storm to find out?" Wufei asked. Heero was already heading toward the door.

"I'll go. I think I can understand a little what's going on here. He may not want to talk, but let's see if I can prevent us all from getting hit by lightning." Heero said as he pulled a cloak over his shoulders and wandered in the direction Trowa went.

Heero found Trowa curled up upon himself near the shore. "You're worrying the others. Want to tell me about him?" Heero said sitting down next to Trowa, ignoring the sting of water as it lashed his face.

"No." Trowa hissed glaring at Heero, Heero only glared back.

"You're not the only one whose lost things Trowa. We all have, I was like you once. I thought I'd be alone forever. Then I found Duo. We we're just kids then, and he and I barely survived those years. We lived in filth, and disease infested rats were everywhere. Duo was damn near eaten alive by a pack of them when we were about ten. He was so ill, and I have never felt so damn helpless in all my life. All my strength and there was nothing I could do for him." Heero said and Trowa sat listening. The winds quieted a little.

"I had gone out to find water for him, something clean enough to drink. When I came back, he was gone. For the next five years, I lived life thinking the sweepers had come and swept him away with the rest of the dead. Thinking if I'd only just stayed by his side I'd have been able to move him out of harms way. I lived with that overwhelming guilt and it was eating me alive. It was a few weeks later Dr. J found me and trained me. I finally had a home, and food, but no Duo. The guilt got worse. He could have been there with me had I stayed with him." Heero said and the winds calmed further and Trowa sat in stony silence beside him.

"It wasn't until a few months ago I learned Dr. J had a brother, Dr. G who was also training a pupil. Can you imagine my relief and my shock when I realized it was Duo? So you see I can relate to how you feel Trowa. You just had a shock, and it's natural to feel anger and guilt, and betrayal. But don't let it consume you. Look to what you have, a chance. A chance to change the way things are, a chance to reach out and grab hold of what you want and hang on to it this time. I know for damn sure I am never walking away again." Heero said and the winds died completely, Trowa looked crest fallen and the tears streamed down his face. Heero reached out and held a weeping Trowa against his shoulder.

"Don't blame yourself for what's happened. Children can do precious little to change the path they walk in life. We do what were told, led to places sometimes we'd rather not be. But we're not children anymore Trowa. It's time for us to move to the head of the line and lead others down a path of our choosing. We will get Quatre back, and you and he can walk together again." Heero said as Trowa silently shook with grief, and fear.

"I just can't get past the fear. What if they changed him? What if he's lost that gentle side he once had? Or worse, what if they hurt him. I can't stop thinking about all the what ifs." Trowa said regaining his composure and sitting up.

"What ifs are just that what ifs. You won't know the truth until you find him. All you can do is try to banish your fears until then, they do you no service and only cause doubt and confusion and you need to be focused if you are to succeed." Heero said and Trowa nodded. What Heero said was true, and he knew that, but knowing the truth and being able to quench the fear were two different things. But he would try, for Quatre's sake he'd try anything.

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The crack of a whip and a cry of agony were the sounds coming from the room Zechs stood outside of eavesdropping and wincing. Voices demanding answers were greeted with silence. Another crack of a whip, another strangled sob, another refusal to speak. This boy was strong of will, but his body would fail him if his captors kept up this torture. This was brutal and with every crack of the whip, Zechs cursed his half Oz'rialite blood. Blood of cruelty and hatred coursed through his vein, staining his very soul. Another cry of pain, then utter silence. The boy had finally lost consciousness, a reprieve. For the time being, they'd continue again once the young man awoke. Zech's cursed Dermail with every fiber of his being, one day it would be Dermail's turn to cower before those he tormented. Mercy would be his only hope.

Zechs waited until the guards left and stole into Quatre's cell. The young man lay in a crumpled heap on the floor. Zechs carefully moved the lacerated body and motioned for his pupil to come closer. Sally crept in and stifled a strangled sob. "Can you help him?" Zechs asked and Sally nodded.

"A little, but not as much as I'd like to. I can stop the bleeding at least and dull the pain somewhat. If I do too much, they will know we've been here." Sally said and Zechs nodded.

"I know, and we cannot be discovered yet. Else the boy will die and all will be lost. I've sent a message to his Excellency, we can only hide and wait until we have the help we need to get this lad out of here." Zechs said as Sally's hand glowed and danced over Quatre's unmoving body.

"Iria? Sister mine don't. If you heal me they'll see. No NO!!! Don't use your gift." Were Quatre's frantic cries. He was still asleep, but his face contorted in pain as Sally touched him with her gift. The moment she pulled back Quatre eased in his duress.

"He won't let me help him Zechs. He's pushing my aura away." Sally said in hushed and worried tones.

"He must have known another Healer who suffered. Boy, listen to me. We are here to help you, just hang on." Zechs whispered urgently to the sleeping form before him and a wall of energy built up around Quatre as a defense. "So, you won't take our help. You are strong. But do not be foolish, do not be a martyr." Zechs said more firmly and azure and sea green eyes opened ever so slightly.

"Help me and they'll kill you. Go, I'll not see another die helping me. I'll survive, I have to." Quatre said before falling back into blackness.

Zechs stood and bowed. "As you wish." Was all he said as he and Sally stole away into the night. Zechs' heart was pounding, such a noble spirit, and unselfish desire to suffer instead of putting others at risk moved Zechs to tears. "Hang on Quatre. We'll get you out of here or I'll die trying." He said to the stars as he impatiently waited for confirmation that his message had been received.

He turned and gazed at his reflection in the mirror. He was only half Oz'rialite, but his human blood was muted in his appearance. He was tall as all Oz'rialites were; his white hair was long and shimmering in the moonlight. His eyes a crystallized icy blue that reflected the light like a cats, it's slitted pupil focusing on his face. His long pointed ears half hidden in the fall of his hair, he was handsome, most Oz'rialites were beautiful in appearance. But he so wished he looked like his mother, his human mother. Hers was a heart built of kindness and charity how he missed her, and how he longed to emulate her peaceful ways. "For you mother I do this, so others like you will never suffer again. Forgive your son; forgive the bloodstains on my hands. Forgive me for what I do; it is the only way I can save others like you. I will fight so you never have to." He said in barely a whisper before turning away from his reflection and returning his gaze to the heavens, to her.

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"We have confirmation!" Noin said running into the study where Treize, his wife Lady Une, and Dr. S sat in silent worry. "Zechs has found him, we must hurry." She said out of breath. A voice behind her startled her.

"Then let's go." Trowa said, his face hard with conviction. Treize stood and nodded.

"Yes, let us depart. Noin, take Trowa, Wufei, Heero, and Duo with you and rendezvous with your husband. Une and I will take the professors and we will meet on the moon base as planned. Good luck, stay hidden if you can, and get out as quickly as possible. We must have time to train together before we can fully strike against the senate." Treize ordered and Noin bowed.

"Yes, your Excellency." She said as she led the quartet of young men to her ship. Trowa sat beside her at the helm, eyes forward. Lines of grim determination set in his handsome features. "Don't be reckless storm boy, stay focused." She quipped and Trowa without looking at her answered her with fire.

"Just fly. I'll decide what is reckless and what is not. Just get me to Quatre." He said and Noin sighed perhaps this cold nature and harsh attitude would abate once Quatre was found. She hoped so, no one should be so miserable with life He saddened her. So she flew as fast as her ship would carry them. She only could hope for the best now, and hope and pray she did, casting worried glances now and again to the silent figure beside her. She prayed harder, this one needed all the help he could get.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Four

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*“And here we are, we’re the Princes of the Universe, here we belong. Fighting for survival we’ve come to be the rulers of your World.”*

*~Lyrics by Queen.*

Noin led her charges down the twisted alleyways in the darkest district of the Oz’rialite capitol. Here lay the vile and detestable underbelly of the empire. Gambling, and black market traders, prostitution and corruption, foulness and greed hung in the air like a stench. It was appalling and nauseating and infected one like a plague as they traversed towards their destination. Trowa saw Heero’s hand clasp Duo’s and squeeze, Duo shuddered and shut his eyes to the sight. Trowa averted his gaze it seemed this place hit a little too close to home. He turned to look at Wufei, whose eyes stared at the back of Noin’s head, never turning his sight to the ugliness on either side.

Trowa however took it all in, every detail, every landmark, every pile of litter, all of it. Learning his surroundings and memorizing every possible escape angle. Heero’s eyes also scanned the area, and they met gazes and nodded solemnly, it seemed they both were too conditioned to not look at the area, even if they too wished to be able to shut out the horrific visions. They stopped at the back of a tavern and Noin wrapped softly, the door opened and revealed a tall white haired man. “Zechs” Noin said softly as her arms folded in relief around the man who returned her embrace, his icy eyes softening as they closed and he inhaled her scent deeply.

“Noin, far too long my heart” He said softly as they stepped aside to allow everyone access to the room. Inside sat three more individuals, two of Oz’rialite heritage one human. Wufei’s eyes landed on the human as he smiled.

“So we meet again Sally.” He said holding out his hand, which she clasped smiling in return.

“Well met indeed Wufei. I see you healed well.” She teased and he blushed slightly.

“Healed and learned a lesson.” He answered still blushing slightly. Duo apparently recovered from the trip through hell’s alley sidled over the pair, idly draping his arms over their shoulders.

“Ho oh, what’ve we here? What did you do Wu-man? Scorch a vital part or something?” Duo asked nonchalantly. Wufei blushed and his face contorted in anger, Sally laughed heartily.

“Oh you could say that.” Sally quipped and Wufei’s temper over-ruled his self-control.

“Woman! My secrets to share, not yours, and the last person who needs to know them is this bastard.” Wufei spat out his words and Sally grinned. Duo was laughing almost uncontrollably.

“Oh I gotta know. Tell me! Tell me! Tell me!” He chuckled pleading with Sally who placed her hands on her hips and smirked.

“Woman, don’t you dare.” Wufei struggled with himself. He didn’t know which one was worse, the idiot with the braid or the woman who drove him to distraction. Either one at this point he was ready to strangle.

“Don’t you threaten me, let’s see if I can start a fire, and burn the whole house down, including my own ass Chang Wufei.” She said. Wufei turned several shades of angry red, Duo was in hysterics on the floor and Noin just shook her head.

“Sally do you enjoy antagonizing Wufei?” Noin asked and Sally only smiled innocently and batted her eyes?

“Antagonize? Me? Never.” She said laughing gaily for a moment before getting out of Wufei’s firing range.

“I’ll get you for this Woman, one of these days.” Wufei said and Sally laughed again.

“You can try.” She said as she sat down at the table where the other two women sat.

“Um, I think the one with the braid needs assistance or else he’s gonna choke.” The raven-haired Oz’rialite said from her chair smiling at the young man still rolling on the floor.

“Let him choke.” Wufei said flopping down onto the floor in the corner and going into a meditation to calm his nerves. Sally always infuriated him. From the first time they met a few years back, when she’d healed his wounds from that mistake he’d made with his gifts and wounding his pride in the process. She was a double-edged sword, and if she were not so damn stimulating he’d toast her.

He smirked to himself, there were other ways of torture however far more appealing as he cracked an eye open to look

at her. She was looking back at him and she winked and blew him a kiss. He frowned and shut his eyes. Damn her, she knew all his buttons, and she pushed all the right ones.

The dark haired Oz'rialite stood and prodded Duo with her toe. "Funny, I though breathing was required with humans. Take a breath will ya!" She said and Duo smiled and looked up to the shorthaired woman.

"Breathing is optional when humor at Wu-man's expense is involved." He said taking the girls hand as she helped him up off the floor. He realized as he stood, she was awfully short for an Oz'rialite. "You kneeling or something?" He said lifting up the hem of her skirt to verify where her feet were. She slapped at him and smiled with mirth uncommon for an Oz'rialite.

"Only a half blood. My mother was human. It seems Oz'rialite soldiers care less who warms their beds at night. My father was some regiment here for an hour." She said and her blue eyes misted slightly and the other young woman stood and draped a protective arm around the smaller girl. The honey haired woman was a full blood, you could tell from her regal bearing.

"Hilde feel no shame for your gift of life. I care not who was responsible for bringing you into this world, or the circumstances in which it happened. I do care that you are here and blessing me with your love." The other girl said hugging tightly the one named Hilde. The Taller girl fluidly turned her gaze towards Duo.

"My name is Relena, I am your liaison while you are here. Here I will hide you, and keep you protected while you see to your comrade. My half brother Zechs will be your guide. Not all Oz'rialite crave your blood and obedience, but I do expect you to treat me and my loved ones with the same respect I will show you." Relena said and Trowa stepped forward.

"And it is appreciated, he meant to insult to your partner." He said and Relena nodded.

"Apology accepted." She said Gracefully turning to look at her brother. "This is your matter now, I have done all I can. Faith with you brother mine, bring us peace." Relena said exiting the room with Hilde. Zechs bowed to his sister as she departed.

"Whoa, I never meant for that to happen." Duo said with shock. Zechs shook his head.

"We know you didn't. But while my sister has a good heart, she was raised differently than I. I was outcast born of a slave mother. Relena was raised by our father, raised as a Lady of the Senate with all the courtly graces and manners that could stifle even the most adaptable of men. She tries, but something's she cannot adapt to, especially where Hilde is concerned." Zechs said gesturing for the men to be seated at the table. "Sally will you be so kind as to get these men a drink?" He asked and Sally nodded and went to retrieve some refreshments for weary travelers.

“Where is Quatre?” Trowa asked not moving from where he still stood.

“For now, in his cell.” Zechs said and Trowa frowned.

“I can guess that much. I am not here to socialize, nor am I here for any quest of yours. I am here for one purpose, to get Quatre. I am this close; I will not wait longer than I must. Dawdling here only serves to give them more time to hurt him.” Trowa said itching to be out of the door and after Quatre.

Sally started him as she took his hand and he fought the impulse to rip it away. “He’s hurt yes, I won’t lie to you. But he’s strong, and you must be rested before you can help him properly. I can see you are anxious to be after him, but going out there in your condition will only give rise to the possibility of making fatal mistakes. We won’t keep you from him longer than is necessary. I promise you that. Now sit please.” Sally said and reluctantly Trowa agreed.

Her pleading gaze striking a tender nerve as he sat down and drank the brew she pressed into his hands. “This is fortified with as many things I could fortify it with without making it taste like dung. So please drink as much as you can, then eat. Then we can begin.” She finished, moving back into the kitchen to make a meal for them.

Trowa drank from his cup and his mind wandered toward his goal. “Quatre, stay safe, stay strong. I’m coming I won’t leave you alone there, I promise. Can you still read my mind? Am I close enough for you to hear me again? Quatre, do you remember me? Do you remember us? Quatre please hear me, I never forgot you not for a single day.” Trowa thought to himself as he closed his eyes and put everything he had into reaching out for the boy he loved.

In his cell Quatre’s eyes opened and he gasped with shock. Tears welled in his eyes as he hugged his tired and beaten naked body where he lay on the floor shivering. “Trowa? Trowa is that you?” He asked, his throat dry and his soft tenor shaking with barely suppressed joy at that familiar yet long denied touch on his senses. The voice in his head was older, but the thoughts, the color, the texture, of them all of it reminded him of another.

Trowa went rigid as he felt something akin to a gentle caress reach back towards him. “Quatre? Quatre do you hear me?” He shouted out gripping the edge of the table nearly knocking it over. Startling the others at the table. Zechs’ hand shot out demanding silence wordlessly. Making sure no one interrupted what was transpiring.

“Trowa?! I hear you. Where are you?” Quatre asked shaking with joy.

“I’m here, I’m near. I’ve come to get you. Are you hurt?” Trowa asked his voice filled with a mix of joy and anguish.

“I’ll be alright. Nothing that won’t heal in time please don’t worry. Oh Trowa I missed you!” Quatre sobbed barely able to

keep the link going he was so tired. His joy was the only thing giving him strength.

Trowa laughed, shocking everyone in the room as he smiled and tears ran down his cheeks from his tightly shut eyes. "I missed you too little mind pick pocket." Trowa said using the nickname he had teased Quatre with all those year ago.

Quatre laughed at the sentiment as he wept tears of joy. "Don't think so clearly then Mr. Big bad wolf." Quatre countered and Trowa laughed again.

"Yes, but now I can huff and puff and blow you down. Get some rest I can tell you're tired. We'll come as soon as we can" Trowa said reaching out with his mind as much as he could to give Quatre a mental version of the embrace he so much wanted to give in the flesh.

Quatre sighed as he felt the intimate embrace on his mind and he returned it, nearly sending Trowa reeling from the effects, he felt dizzy with euphoria.

"Whose we Trowa?" Quatre asked, the link fading, the embrace taking most of the energy he had left.

"Friends, others like us Quatre. Now sleep." Trowa said with a sigh. Not really wanting to let go, but knowing he was taxing his beloved's precious energy.

"I will, but I miss you by my side." Quatre said and Trowa smiled.

"I miss having you there, even your cold feet." Trowa teased and he could feel Quatre giggle through the weakening link.

"But you were warm." Quatre said and Trowa smiled.

"And will warm you again, now rest I'll be with you soon." Trowa said and he felt Quatre slip into slumber. He opened his eyes to find six pairs of eye gawking at him and the smile slipped and the stern mask replaced them on his countenance.

"What are you staring at?" He asked and Duo's jaw dropped.

“The man talks to air and has the nerve to ask us why we’re staring? Geez Trowa, and they think I’m dense. So how’s blondie?” Duo asked and Trowa sighed.

“Tired, and I know Quatre when he tells you not to worry, you’d better worry. We need to get to him soon.” Trowa said and Zechs nodded.

“Tonight, go get some rest all of you. I’ll wake you when it’s time to go.” He said as Sally laid out bedrolls on the floor. Trowa immediately crawled into his and shut his eyes. Soon wasn’t soon enough, the only thing that mattered was getting Quatre back by his side where he belonged.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Five

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*"I'm a man that will go far, fly the moon and reach for the stars. With my sword in hand held high, I can pass the test first try."*

*"Princes of the Universe" ~Lyrics by Queen.*

Quatre curled around himself and slept peacefully despite his pain and the cold seeping into his joints. Trowa was here, Trowa had reached out to him and had touched his mind bringing to Quatre a joy that had been missing from his life since the day Trowa had been taken from him. A tender smile graced bruised lips and tears trickled down his cheeks leaving trails where they washed the caked on blood and dirt away. Quatre's dream-self reached out, seeking that comfort that was so close.

Trowa stirred in his sleep but did not awaken from his repose his dreams were filled with visions of the ocean near his home. He was looking out over the calm waters as turned when a voice spoke. "So this was where you've been".

Trowa turned to see a young man standing behind him. He was dressed in a sky blue tunic that billowed loosely around slender shoulders. The soft doe skin breeches hugging slender and well-toned legs. The blonde and semi-short, near shaggy length hair waving in the sea breeze framed and caressed a face too beautiful to be real. But it was real; he'd know those eyes, and that glorious smile anywhere. This was perfection this was his Quatre. The boy turned man stood there for a moment, just returning the scrutinizing gaze.

"Quatre." Trowa said at last, his arms reaching out to the young man in his dreams.

"Trowa." Quatre's soft tenor nearly sang back as he almost dove into those waiting arms. There they stood, lost for an indeterminable amount of time, in each other's arms. Quatre's head resting against Trowa's chest, as Trowa laid a cheek atop downy soft spun gold that served as Quatre's hair.

"I missed you so much." Quatre sobbed into Trowa's chest and Trowa's arms clutched tighter.

"No more than I could have missed you. Is this a dream or is this real?" Trowa asked and within the folds of his shirt, a muffled giggle could be heard.

“Yes, and no. You’re asleep, so am I. Technically.” Quatre said looking up into eyes a brilliant emerald hue that glistened with tears of happiness.

“You have gotten stronger, if you can waltz into my dreams as you please even while asleep.” Trowa said reaching up to run fingers through Quatre’s soft mane. Quatre closed his eyes and leaned into the caress.

“I couldn’t be here, if you were not already wanting me to be. You opened the door for me.” Quatre said and Trowa smiled.

“I always dream of you, is that so odd?” Trowa asked and Quatre blushed slightly.

“No, seeing as my dreams are rather predictable too. Only I never dreamed of you quite like this.” Quatre said stepping back to look at Trowa. “You’ve changed, but then tens years can do that to a person I suppose.” Quatre said his eyes sparkling with innocence, and pure desire.

Trowa’s smile turned almost predatory as he backed his dream Quatre into the rock face and planted his hands on either side of his head. He leaned in and nose-to-nose he whispered. “Disappointed?” He asked and Quatre blushed and averted his gaze.

“No.” Came the almost in audible squeak.

“Neither am I.” Trowa almost purred into Quatre’s ear and he pressed his lips against Quatre’s temple. “I love you, I always have.” Trowa voice near a growl as he inhaled Quatre’s scent and pressed in closer to his captive. Quatre’s hand reached up Trowa’s back and pulled him closer.

“I love you too.” Quatre said soft as coo of a dove. Trowa’s resolve melted and he captured his dream lover’s lips in a searing kiss. Quatre’s arms wound tighter as he clung to Trowa; the only thing separating their bodies was the fabric that encased them.

Hands wound into hair, lips battled for possession as they rejoiced in unspoken understanding. Each had always known that their love was returned. It was never necessary to be said aloud, it was shouted in their eyes when they looked upon one another. Their hearts sang a chorus to the heavens whenever one spoke the other’s name. Their very souls trumpeted a bond when they touched. You just knew when the one you loved was meant to be yours. There was no way to describe the feelings of unity and oneness they shared. It could only be felt in their hearts, it could only be experienced in their soul-unifying kiss.

Trowa pulled back from his kiss and cupped Quatre's face in his hands. "No one will take you from me again. No one will take me from you. Hold on until tonight, and I'll show you for real how much you mean to me Quatre." Trowa said and Quatre closed his eyes and smiled.

"But this is real. Our bodies may be apart, but our souls are here, now. It cannot be any more real than this." Quatre said melting into Trowa's embrace.

Again they just stood there, bodies clinging to each other as the sea gulls sang to them and the sea she provided the music.

All too soon, the moment shattered. Quatre was violently ripped from Trowa's embrace screaming his name. Trowa bolted into wakefulness Quatre's name leaping from his throat in a desperate cry of agony. Tears were streaming down his cheeks, and outside the skies darkened and the thunder rolled and lightning flashed.

Trowa's eyes were dark with fury and rage. "Trowa?! What's WRONG?" Sally cried reaching his side first.

"We go now. They've taken Quatre, he needs us now." Trowa said in a deep rumbling growl as he struggled out of his bedroll. Everyone else up and ready to follow him. They had no doubt he spoke the truth, not after the episode at dinner. Fear hung in the air, and the skies heralded a lover's wrath.

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Quatre whimpered as the lashes flayed more of his tender flesh. His arms were shackled above his head and he dangled limply from his lacerated and bleeding wrists. His head lolled listlessly from side to side as his body jerked from the pain.

"You will talk to us slave. You will tell us what we want to know, or you will die. Who is your master training? Who are his accomplices?" Came the demand followed by another lash.

"He trains no Oz'rialite, I told you this." Quatre said which was the truth. Another lash.

"We know H was training a mage, where is he slave?" Came the question and Quatre bit his lip and waited for the lash. He could not use his gifts, if he did all was lost and they would know that it was humans they were after. He had to keep the others safe, and the only way to do so was to allow these men to beat him. For even if he did stop these guards, the camera's filming him would see, and Demail would be alerted. Quatre knew the only chance they had was to remain mere humans. Demail did not perceive humans as a threat.

The lash struck his back and Quatre wailed in pain. "TALK! Or DIE"

Silence and despair he couldn't take much more of this. Another lash, another shout of agony. Outside the sounds of a severe thunderstorm howled. "Trowa." Quatre's lips silently formed his name and his consciousness ebbed away.

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Five men and two women raced down darkened streets towards the holding facility that contained Quatre. Trowa's sudden squall sending nearly everyone inside for cover leaving the route hazardous only from the rain and wind.

"Remind me to bring a towel when we travel with tsunami here." Duo said pushing rain soaked bangs out of his eyes. Trowa just glared and lightning flashed. "Whoa, touchy! Sorry." Duo said as they continued at a hurried pace.

"This way." Zechs said as they entered the sewer grate below the building. "This will take us almost directly to him. They don't put humans in maximum security." Zechs said and Heero snorted.

"Not likely for a human slave to have friends to bust them out in other words." He said and Sadly Zechs nodded as he followed in behind the rest.

The sewer was flowing rapidly due to the water crashing down from above and 7 figures slogged through near knee-deep water.

"Can we turn off the faucet for a bit Trowa?" Duo asked and the waters parted before them.

"Lazy" Trowa muttered under his breath. The water's still raced by on either side, but the path was clear.

"Whoa, nice trick Tro." Duo muttered and Heero pinched him.

"Now is not the time for jokes." Heero hissed and Duo nodded.

“Only trying to keep him from going out there on us.” Duo whispered and Heero nodded.

“I know, but it’s not working. He’s alright.” Heero said as they reached a junction with a ladder.

They made an ascent and Zechs shoulders away the grate. They entered a dank line of cellblocks smelling of mold, and feces. “This way.” Zechs said going to a door at the end of the corridor. He opened it and stifled a cry. Noin behind him gasped and turned her hand over her mouth. Trowa burst past them both and a strangled sob fell from his lips and he fell to his knees. Sally rushed past him and knelt beside the naked body in a heap on the floor. The rest stood in horrified shock.

Trowa crawled over to the body, afraid to even touch him. Everywhere you looked he was cut and bleeding. His skin was a mass of bruises ranging from the yellow hue of old ones, to the black and blue marks of recent beatings, to the red welts of fresh wounds. He was unmoving, and barely breathing. From his mouth, blood dripped. Trowa wept and ran a finger down a tendril of soiled and matted blonde hair. “Quatre.” Was the hoarse choked whisper. “Hold on Love, please.”

Sally frowned and focused. Running her glowing hands over the worse of his wounds. “He’s bad, I’ll need more time than we have to help him. I can heal the worst of it and stop the bleeding. But we need to get out of here fast or else he’s not going to make it.” Sally said closing the weeping marks on his wrists and back. Once closed Trowa scooped him up into his arms.

“Let’s go now. I won’t let him die!” Trowa said as they raced back the way they had come. Trowa clutching Quatre's limp and lifeless body to him as gently as he could. “I won’t let you die.” He said again with conviction as he cradled Quatre to his breast as he ran.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Six

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand”

*“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen*

By the time they reached the ladder, sounds of alarm could be heard. “Shit! Here they come guys.” Duo said whipping around to look back down the hallway. “Go on, I’ll hold them off here.” He said his violet eyes taking on an eerie inner glow. Wufei turned with him his staff raised.

“I’ll help here, let’s try NOT to kill anyone yet.” Wufei said and Duo nodded.

“Don’t worry, I don’t have ta kill ‘em to make ‘em wish they we’re dead.” Duo said glaring toward the sounds of rapidly approaching footfalls.

Heero turned to Trowa. “Give him to me. You can’t maintain this storm and carry him back. Besides I’m faster.” Heero said demanding Trowa turn over the body he clutched. It took everything Trowa possessed to let Quatre’s body go and trust a person he hardly knew with the most important thing in his life. “Don’t worry Trowa, I’ll protect him with my life if need be.” Heero said as he literally leapt into the manhole holding Quatre’s body. He landed square and solid on his feet and within moments there was no sign of Heero or Quatre.

Trowa seized Sally’s arm and flung her over his shoulder as he too leapt into the grate forgoing the use of the ladder. Graceful as a panther he landed and set Sally on her feet, not relinquishing her hand as he pulled her along with him as fast as his feet could carry them both. Behind him he heard Zechs and Noin make a similar entrance into the sewer hot on their trail.

Wufei planted his staff into the cracks of the floor as he muttered an incantation that Duo could not only understand but could barely hear before the cracks in the floor began to glow with a light almost blindingly white. Then fire erupted from the floor scorching everything it consumed. Quatre’s cell was spewing out white-hot flames looking like the mouth of a great dragon. Angry voices on the other side of the wall of flame could be heard shouting for assistance. “Let them think Quatre perished in the blaze.” Wufei said and Duo grinned.

“Good idea. But what about the other prisoner’s?” Duo asked and Wufei sighed.

“Give me a little credit cretin. They will not be harmed these flames are not real. They may feel hot but look.” Wufei said sticking his hand in the flames.

“Learned not to burn your ass I see.” Duo said ducking out of the swing of Wufei’s arm as he went to hit Duo. Duo just disappeared down into the sewer. “Missed me! We’d better get moving.” Duo said as Wufei floated down the shaft eyes glaring at Duo.

“When we get back, you are going to pay for your insolence.” Wufei said and Duo chuckled as they ran down the drainage pipe.

“Yeah, yeah. You always say that. You love me, admit it.” Duo said and yelped as Wufei tugged his braid from behind.

“Love to hate you, yes.” Wufei said out pacing Duo momentarily before skidding to a halt. Soldiers we’re coming up the pipe, their only escape route blocked.

Duo shoved Wufei behind him. “Do not look at me Wu-man.” Duo said and Wufei covered his eyes and knelt behind Duo.

“Human scum, where do you think you’re going slaves?” The two soldiers asked as they walked without fear toward what seemed like two helpless young men trying to escape from their prison.

“Going to get the hell outta here, that’s where.” Duo said his eyes glowing and both men froze in their tracks, clutching their throats. It was as if hands had suddenly closed around their throats, and more hands were reaching inside to squeeze their hearts. Panic-stricken and immobile they stood. No breath to even scream in fear as they both succumbed and collapsed to the ground.

“Let’s go Wufei.” Duo said grimly as they passed the bodies on the ground without obstruction. “Don’t worry, they’re not dead.” Duo said as Wufei’s eyes widened slightly. Duo looked like a totally different man, his jovial mask replaced with a dark and ominous quality. He did indeed look like a god of death and destruction as the glow faded slowly from his eyes.

“What did you do?” Wufei asked not sure if he even should.

“I can feel your pulse of life, and I can alter it. I can stop your heart, steal your breath, or change the electrical impulses of your brain within your body. I made them both think they had heart attacks.” Duo said and Wufei nodded solemnly Duo didn’t just look like death he was death. They ran the rest of the way back to the tavern in utter silence. The first strike had been waged and won. But even the smallest victory comes with a price it appeared.

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Trowa crouched opposite Sally as Quatre lay between them. Her hands drew glowing green patterns over the still body that still labored to breathe. Trowa held the cold limp hand in his and fought a new onslaught of tears. Sally was in a complete trance as she hummed with power that was beginning to crackle with exhaustion. Wufei got up from where he had been sitting in the corner meditating and sat down behind Sally wrapping his arms around her waist and laying his cheek against her back. He too began to glow an orange-red and her green aura sprang into a brighter hue.

“Thank you Wufei.” She said softly and he grunted.

“Thank me later, you’re getting tired. Just use my energy and help Quatre woman.” Wufei said and Sally sighed and concentrated on her task at hand.

Off in another corner Heero sat in a chair, with Duo’s head in his lap. Heero ran fingers through the thick mane of hair in a soothing gesture. Tear tracks could be seen long dried on Duo’s cheeks. It had been a rough night for them all in various ways. Silence was dominating the room as Sally continued to mend a broken Quatre.

The lacerations slowly began to fade from Quatre’s milky white skin, and the cuts began to close of their own accord. His breathing seemed to stabilize and the feeling of urgency began to dissipate as Sally lowered her hands with a sigh. “That’s the worst of it, food and sleep should take care of the rest.” She said and Trowa looked up, gratefulness apparent in his red-rimmed eyes. Sally smiled. “No thanks necessary. It’s what I was born to do.” She said shoving his hair from his eyes in a motherly fashion even if she wasn’t but a few years older herself.

Wufei stood and pulled Sally to her feet. “Rest for you too first before you do anything else.” He said and lifted Sally up off her feet too quell the protests he knew were coming. Sally just smirked.

“Oh how romantic is this. He finally wants to take me to bed, and carries me like a sack of potatoes to get me there.” She quipped getting relived and tired laughter from the rest of the weary bunch. Wufei slapped her rump.

“Do shut up Sally, we’ll discuss this later after you sleep.” He said carrying her into the next room and shutting the door behind him.

The rest one by one vacated the room Quatre was in leaving Trowa alone with him. He got up and drew a basin of warm water setting it beside the bedroll. Then retrieved a cloth and returned to Quatre's side. Dipping the cloth in the water and finding a small cake of soap, Trowa delicately washed away the filth that clung to Quatre, both in reality and metaphysically. With each loving pass of the cloth, that pristine aura that was Quatre began to resurface.

Trowa hesitated briefly as he moved from Quatre's torso and face to his legs, dare he? Well it needed cleaning too, but somehow it didn't feel right, like he was intruding too intimately too soon. He couldn't help blushing as he just looked at Quatre's naked and extremely attractive body. He couldn't help getting very aroused either at the sight before him. Oh how he wanted to touch that body everywhere without the infernal washcloth.

"What's stopping you?" came a weak and weary voice. Trowa's head whipped around to stare into half lidded eyes. A smile half innocent, half encouraging stretched Quatre's lips. "You must learn not to think so clearly Trowa. Not unless you want me to know all your secrets." Quatre said trying to sit up.

Trowa pressed him back onto the bedroll to hover over him protectively. "I have nothing to hide from you." Trowa said closing the gap and placing his lips firmly but gently onto Quatre's. Quatre's arms came up to weakly encircle Trowa, his hands resting lightly on the larger man's back. Trowa broke the kiss shaking his head. "How do you feel?" He asked truly concerned.

"Tired, but the pain is only discomfort now. Thank you Trowa." Quatre said running gentle fingers down Trowa's cheek.

"Don't thank me this is Sally's doing, she healed you. Thank the maker." Trowa said once more bursting into tears of relief, pressing his mouth once again against Quatre's. Quatre rejoiced in the kiss and his hands wound themselves into the rich chestnut fall of hair that always managed to fall forward into Trowa's face, like a veil to hide his beauty. Trowa's tongue demanded entrance and it was freely given as their kiss deepened even further. Breathing had become optional and an annoyance when Trowa finally had to surface for air.

"If I don't stop this now, it's not going to stop and you need rest Quatre." Trowa said sitting up and brushing Quatre's hair from his face.

"Don't I get the rest of my bath?" Quatre asked his eyes twinkling with devilish joy as a tiny smirk crossed his lips. Trowa smiled.

"Don't tempt me Quatre, you're playing with fire." Trowa said flopping the now cold rag on Quatre's obvious arousal. Quatre shivered and pouted. "That's should quell your urges."

“You’re cruel, and I thought I was playing with wind and water, not fire.” Quatre teased and Trowa shook his head chuckling.

“And to think I mistook you for an angel at first glance. You devilish little imp!” Trowa said standing up from where he sat on the edge of the bedroll, stripping off his shirt and boots before turning off the light and crawling under the covers beside Quatre. Quatre melted into the warmth of those arms and inhaled deeply. This was where he belonged. “Now hush and sleep. We have time enough later for what I want to do to you.” Trowa said giving Quatre’s neck a little nibble for good measure.

Quatre giggled but snuggled deeper into those arms. “Is it later yet?”

“Quatre, go to sleep.” Trowa sighed, same old Quatre, ever the playful spirit.

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Trowa awoke first and for the first time in ten years he truly smiled and felt glad to greet a new day. Quatre as he had done in his youth, had stolen most of the covers and had tangled himself up in them. His hair splayed about the pillow like a halo of sunshine. The color of his skin had turned from that sallow and near translucent shade of white, to a creamy peach hue. His cheeks flushed with that rosy hue that simply took Trowa’s breath away. There was no way Quatre could be human, he was far too beautiful to be one both inside and outside.

Trowa’s fears abated, Quatre had not changed in the slightest where his heart was concerned. He was still that caring, witty, joy bringing soul he had been as a child. Trowa wouldn’t have thought it possible, but he fell ever more deeply in love with this surreal entity beside him.

Trowa carefully disengaged himself from the covers and wandered out into the main room where the others were also slowly coming to life around him. He found Noin in the kitchen and Zechs leaning over the cup she had placed in front of him. “Merry Morning Trowa.” She quipped and Trowa nodded and gave her a soft smile. She nearly choked, it wasn’t ‘good morning’, but it was the first positive gesture, hell the first acknowledgement he’d given since she’d met him.

“Quatre will need clothes.” He said finding two cups and pouring the boiling water from the kettle over tealeaves within.

“That he will. I’ll go out and get him some here shortly. How tall is he?” Noin asked seeing as it was hard to gauge a person’s size when you’d never seen them in an upright position before.

“About this tall.” Came a merry and bright tenor. Trowa frowned.

"You get back in bed." Trowa said to the slight figure he stood in the kitchen doorframe wearing nothing but Trowa's discarded tunic. The sleeves were ridiculously long and the garment itself nearly hanging to Quatre's knees. "God he's adorable." Trowa mused to himself and Quatre chuckled.

"Thank you." He said as he almost danced into the kitchen taking a cup from Trowa's hand.

"STOP IT PICK POCKET." Trowa groaned and Quatre laughed.

"I'm not doing it Trowa. How many times do I have to tell you?" Quatre said gently blowing on his tea before taking a sip. His eyes were dancing with mirth as he mischievously peered at Trowa over the rim of the cup.

"I know, I know. Stop thinking so clearly." Trowa said flopping into a chair opposite Zechs who chuckled.

Noin laughed out loud. "Okay Quatre, what's your secret? That's the first time I've seen Trowa at a loss let alone give up." Noin said and Quatre smiled brightly.

"No secret's that's it right there." Quatre said grinning and fighting sleeves as he tried to drink his tea. "Okay Trowa, who said you could grow up so darn big?" Quatre said with annoyance as he set his cup down and once again tried to roll up Trowa's shirtsleeves.

"Who said I'm the one that's big? I don't see you towering over anything Pick Pocket." Trowa said tugging at the hem of his shirt so Quatre would step closer. Trowa proceeded to roll the sleeves up for him. It was always easier to have someone else do it that try to do it yourself one-handed anyway.

Noin smiled and stepped back her hand on her chin. "Definitely Blue, or lavender. What do you think Sally?" Noin asked eyeing Quatre up and down. Sally who had sleepily observed most of the kitchen activities this morning smirked.

"Blue. That's his color." Sally grinned and Quatre smiled at her.

"By the way, thank you. I owe my life to you all." Quatre said and Sally shook her head.



# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Seven

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“No Man could understand. My power is in my own hand. People talk about you, people say you’ve had your day.”

*“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen*

Quatre made his way into the main room and was nearly knocked over by Duo who was rubbing the sleep out of his eyes and not paying attention to where he was headed. Heero thankfully was watching and managed to catch Quatre before he fell. However the hot tea did manage to spill and Quatre sucked in his breath, Heero’s jaw dropped in fascination. There the boiling hot liquid hung suspended in mid-air, hovering just above Quatre’s bare legs, and Duo’s forearm. Trowa rushed to the doorframe and also stood in utter amazement looking at the freeze frame of action.

Quatre took his empty cup and ran it around the puddle of tea in mid-air collecting it back into it’s container. “That would have hurt.” Quatre said matter of factly smiling gaily as he sipped from his cup again. Duo shook his head vigorously as if to clear his vision.

“I did not just see that. How the fuck?” Duo stammered and Quatre giggled at the look of disbelief plastered on Duo’s face.

“It’s called avoiding a scalding.” Quatre teased and winked at Duo who finally realized just who it was he’d almost run into in the first place.

“Hey, Quatre! Okay I’m not gonna ask how you managed to be mobile again so soon after seeing that trick. But how ya feeling? You look a whole lot better than when I saw you last.” Duo said smiling as he got a better look of the man they’d gone to rescue.

Quatre chuckled light-heartedly as he smiled. “Much better today thanks to all of you.” Quatre said quite sincerely. Heero just nodded and returned Quatre’s smile. Duo seemed to jolt as he realized his missing manners all of a sudden.

“Sorry man. The name’s Duo, this is Heero.” Duo said introducing himself and his partner properly. Quatre smiled and took Duo’s outstretched hand. He nearly fainted completely as he wilted where he stood.

“Quatre!” Trowa dove for him capturing him in his arms, this time the tea did spill.

“Get Duo out of here. Get him out of this place, this city, his pain.” Quatre choked out weakly, his throat closed with anguished emotion “Too much, he’s hurting deeply.” Quatre said looking up into Trowa’s eyes. Pleading with a gaze that ripped Trowa’s heart from his chest. Duo collapsed to his knees and reached out in apology.

“How could you know? I’m sorry.” Duo stumbled and tried to touch Quatre to show his apology and Trowa slapped his hand away.

“Don’t Duo. Touch amplifies his reception. He’s not strong enough yet to cope with it.” Trowa said and Duo nodded, tears pooling in his eyes.

“I’m so sorry.” Duo choked out ashamed that his biggest fear and most bitter memories he thought he hidden so well had such an affect on Quatre. He was about to get up and run away until a small hand shot out and snatched him around his wrist.

“Don’t be sorry, just don’t swallow all that pain, it’s the past. The past cannot hurt you in the present.” Quatre said as his eyes drifted shut and he sank into Trowa’s embrace unconscious.

Heero pulled Duo into his arms. “He’s right love. And I won’t let you suffer it again.” Heero said and Duo turned into Heero’s embrace. Trowa’s and Heero’s eyes met briefly for a silent exchange of understanding before both men took their respective partners away for further comforting in private.

“Right, the sooner we get out of here all together, the better.” Noin said grabbing her cloak. “I’m going to get Quatre something to wear, then we are all out of this god-forsaken place.” Noin said dashing out the door with haste.

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Duo buried his face in Heero’s shoulder and shook with silent tears. All these years, he’d thought he could forget the horrors of this city. But coming back here he felt eight years old again, everywhere he looked he saw faces of past tormentors in the shadows, he felt the phantom pangs of hunger in his stomach. He shivered from memories of bitter cold with nowhere to turn for warmth save for Heero’s embrace where he sought refuge once again. He could not escape the feelings of hopelessness, and insignificance this place made him feel inside. Hard as he tried, no matter how many times he reminded himself he was not that same little boy anymore, he couldn’t help feeling like on in this former Hell that had once been his home.



“All right. I feel wrung out. I’m tired, and yes when I’m this tired I cannot maintain a good shield. Happy now?” Quatre said sarcastically. THAT was something new. Trowa quirked an eyebrow in astonishment, that was definitely a new trait Quatre had picked up.

“No, I won’t be happy until you’re in one-piece again. Nor will I be happy if you keep doing idiotic things like that. Saying ‘Thank you’ can wait until you are better Quatre. I know damn well you rushed out there this morning because you have this insane sense of guilt if you do not say ‘please’, ‘thank you’, or ‘I’m sorry’ at least twenty times a day. So stop it. No one here wants you to put yourself at risk just because your manners over-rule your common sense.” Trowa said pushing Quatre’s bottom lip. “And while you’re cute when you pout, you can knock that off too. I don’t crack as easy as that.” Trowa added with a wink.

Quatre pursed his lips. “I’m a big boy now Trowa. I know I’m about as useful as a throw rug right now. But I think I can handle myself all right. I just was not expecting power that strong. Now let me up please. Have a little faith in me not to overdo it.” Quatre said and reluctantly Trowa let Quatre sit upright. Quatre frowned as he shifted to sit up against the wall beside Trowa.

“I just worry.” Trowa said and Quatre looked at him and smiled.

“You always did. But then I gave you reason to ten years ago. I had absolutely no control over my gifts nor did I know the first thing about shielding myself. Not like you who are so guarded naturally you’ve had them built up around you like a fortress since probably before you could walk.” Quatre said and Trowa nodded.

“I guess that’s why I never affected you like everyone else did back then. I never even stopped to think about it really.” Trowa said picking at a strand of thread on the rough blanket they sat on.

“That’s exactly the reason. I needed you then desperately. I still need you that much, but for different reasons.” Quatre said taking Trowa’s hand and kissing the backs of his fingers. Trowa smiled and draped his arm around Quatre’s shoulders pulling him close. Quatre leaned against him and rested his head on Trowa’s shoulder.

“I’ll still worry. Even if I know you can handle yourself, old habits die hard.” Trowa said and Quatre chuckled.

“I know you will, and you know I’ll continue to tell you not to worry. So let’s just agree to disagree about this moot point.” Quatre said and Trowa chuckled.

“Agreed.” Trowa said as they heard the outer door open and shut and a knock soon to follow on the door they sat facing.

“Come in.” Quatre chirruped sitting up from where he had been leaning against Trowa’s side.

Noin walked in with a small bundle “I hope these fit.” She said setting the bag down next to Quatre and smiled at him. “If you feel up to it, we’ll leave as soon as you’re dressed.” She said and Quatre nodded.

“Up to it or not, we’re leaving. I can manage.” Quatre said and Noin nodded and excused herself while Quatre got dressed.

“There you go again. Thinking about Duo and not yourself.” Trowa said frowning.

“I can manage. I’ll rest when we get off this planet, I promise.” Quatre said and Trowa folded his arms across his chest.

“I’ll hold you to that promise.” Trowa said with a wink and Quatre smiled as he pulled the dusty camel colored breeches up his legs. Trowa tilting his head slightly as Quatre bent over.

Quatre swiveled his hips from side to side as he tantalizingly pulled his breeches over his hips slowly. “Glad you like my ass. I never thought I had one.” Quatre teased and Trowa growled.

“STOP IT!” Trowa said in frustration running a hand down his face. Was he doomed to a life of never having a private erotic thought? His mind asked himself.

“Not unless you...” Quatre began and Trowa almost screamed.

“I KNOW! Stop thinking so clearly.” Trowa said just standing up and storming towards the door.

“You’d better be prepared. Once I’m not afraid I’m going to break you.” Trowa said and Quatre smiled wickedly.

“I’m counting on it.” He said with a wink. That was it, Trowa fled from the room outside completely. A cold rain shower suddenly erupted outside and Trowa stood arms wide and let the rainfall on him.

“What’s with Trowa?” Duo asked wondering why in the world Trowa was making it rain again.

Quatre came out wearing a sky blue tunic, with a dusty rose trim over, soft camel tan colored breeches with matching boots. He was almost painfully beautiful. Duo chuckled. “Ah, I see. Needed a cold shower did he?” Duo smirked and Quatre blushed slightly. But declined to answer, letting his silence tell the truth. Duo burst into a fit of laughter. “Yo Trowa! Ice down the pants works faster.” Duo hollered out the door. Lightening flashed once. “Damn, Mr. Wishy-washy is just no fun.” Duo pouted and Quatre giggled gaily as he carried Trowa’s tunic out to him once the sudden shower ceased.

Once dressed again seven figures made their way towards Peacemillion, Zechs’ and Noin’s private vessel. Once inside all breathed a sigh of relief as the atmosphere dissipated and the stars of space twinkled at them through the view screen. “Now we rendezvous with Treize on Sha’ri deh’yah.” Noin said punching in the coordinates.

“Now the work truly begins.” Zechs answered her as he piloted their most precious of cargos towards the desert moon where Treize had erected a secret base of operations with the help of the loyal moon natives and their staunchest allies, the Mag’ua’nacs. Their Leader Rashid was always ready willing and able to help a man he deemed friend. Thankfully, the Mag’ua’nac race of peoples judged a man on character rather than breeding. Once judged you had one of two options: The Mag’ua’nacs either killed you or served you with unfailing loyalty until the bitter end. Here came the true test. Zechs hoped the young men in tow met with favor.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Eight

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

## “Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Everyone seemed to heave a collective sigh of relief as they watched the Oz’rialites’ home planet grow smaller in appearance then fade from their vision entirely. “How long till we rendezvous with the others?” Heero asked coming to sit beside Zechs at the helm.

“Seventy-two hours. You all can take a much-needed rest. We all can.” Zechs said as he punched a few buttons then stood and stretched. “Peacemillion is a godsend in times like these. She’ll get us there on her own know.” Zechs said affectionately patting the console. Noin smirked.

“That just bugs me. You fondle your ship more than you fondle me.” She teased and Zechs grinned.

“Stick around me more often and you’ll see that change.” He answered leaning over to kiss her cheek. “Shall we show them the ship before we get too distracted?” He asked a predatory smile on his lips. Noin hungrily returned that smile as she stood and walked out into the secondary compartment where everyone sat around in what appeared to be a living area of sorts.

Two banks of seats lined two adjoining walls making a very cozy looking “L” shaped couch. That was where Duo was sprawled, his feet resting on the mounted to the floor low table in front of it. On the other end of the couch, Quatre had his feet curled up under him, his cheek propped against his hand as he gazed out the window into space, fighting the affects of exhaustion as his head bobbed slightly and his eyes shut.

“Okay, time to hold you to that promise.” Trowa said getting up from the small table in the opposite corner where he and Wufei had been sitting. The small round table, also bolted to the floor, had a top surface with a myriad of buttons along the outer edge. Each button as you pressed it brought a different pattern to the tabletop. It was obviously a gaming table of sorts. Noin smiled as she watched Trowa walkover to the young man fighting to stay awake.

“Come, follow me, I’ll show you where you’ll be sleeping. One thing Peacemillion is, and that it is at least comfortable.”

Noin said pressing a wall panel to reveal a short corridor and a bank of doors. "Here are the sleeping quarters." She said as Trowa nodded as he scooped up Quatre off the couch who protested meekly about being able to walk. Trowa ignored him as he followed Noin to the end of the passage.

"There, you two can sleep here. This room has just about anything he'll need. There's a bathing room, and this room is right next to Sally's so if you need her she'll be handy." Noin said as Trowa draped Quatre onto the lovely large bed. In times like these, one was very thankful Oz'rialites were a rather large race of peoples. Plenty of room in an Oz'rialite bed for him, Quatre and practically room for at least two more people to comfortably fit within.

"Thank you." Quatre said his voice filled with fatigue.

"Don't mention it. Just get some rest." Noin said with a wink before turning and letting the door slide shut behind her. Quatre yawned and sat up swinging his legs out of bed.

"Just what do you think you're doing? Back in bed." Trowa said planting one hand on his hip and the other pointed towards the bed in an order.

"Unless, oh big bad wolf, you know of a way to empty one's bladder by magic you'll let me out of this bed. Even I have to take a piss once in a while." Quatre said frowning and Trowa's eyes went wide for a moment. He was going to have to get used to that sarcasm. You just didn't expect things like that to come out of Quatre's mouth.

"You want me to help?" Trowa asked as he recovered and stepped closer to Quatre who had reached the bathroom door. He glanced back over his shoulder and a wicked gleam twinkled in his beautiful tired eyes.

"Unless you want to hold it for me, I think I can manage." Quatre grinned and for the first time, he made Trowa blush. Trowa had certainly NOT meant that, he would have to choose his words more carefully. Trowa could hear Quatre giggle from behind the bathroom door.

"When did you get that mean streak?" Trowa spoke loudly enough to be heard through the closed door as it swooshed open to show a naked Quatre. Trowa swallowed hard as Quatre's clothes were tossed out hitting him in the face.

"I've always had it, you're just noticing more now." Quatre said turning back into the bathroom. "I cannot resist this, I feel filthy. I'm going to shower before I sleep if that's quite all right with you worry wart." Quatre said moving to the tub and bending over to turn the taps on in the shower. What he didn't expect to feel was now Trowa's equally naked body moving up behind him to press against his backside.

"I could do with one myself. And I certainly don't want you to slip when you're this tired." Trowa purred running his hands down Quatre's sides from behind stopping at his hips, tugging them backwards to press against his quite obvious arousal. Quatre blushed and his lips turned into a seductive smirk.

"So do I get the rest of my bath from you then?" Quatre asked turning around slowly, wrapping his arms around Trowa's neck and stepping closer so his erection rubbed against Trowa's. Both men hissed with the pleasure that one touch brought them. Trowa growled and pressed Quatre up against the shower wall, claiming his mouth in a near violent kiss. The warm spray raining down over their bodies and the stream began to fill the room.

Trowa reached between them and firmly grasped Quatre's length, causing the blonde to throw his head back and moan and buck his hips forward into Trowa's hand. "Oh God, Trowa."

Trowa smiled and bent his head to capture Quatre's mouth. One hand blindly finding the soap, Trowa lathered up his hands and began to stroke Quatre in a gentle rhythm, Quatre moaned and Trowa smiled breaking the kiss. "Like that?" He asked and Quatre could only groan an affirmative as he tried to find a handhold in the slick shower to remain standing. Trowa was the only thing within reach and Quatre clung to him as Trowa's hands caressed him in the most intimate of ways.

Trowa's hands moved from Quatre's arousal to trail up his body and a whimper of protest erupted from Quatre's lips. Trowa chuckled. "In a minute, let's get the rest of you clean. Because by the time I'm finished with you, I don't think standing will be an option." Trowa said grabbing more of the fragrant soap and reaching up to massage it into Quatre's hair. From there he covered every inch of Quatre's body with the silky scent of roses and jasmine. He backed Quatre under the spray and rinsed him off then physically lifted him out of the tub draping a towel around him. "I assume you can make it back to the bed alright?" He asked and Quatre nodded still dazed. "Good, go wait for me, I'll be right there." Trowa said diving back into the shower to take a quick wash himself.

Quatre dried off and minus the towel lay in the bed his eyes heavy with fatigue and lust. Trowa came out of the bathroom drying himself vigorously and smiled at the vision in the bed.

Trowa discarded the towel on the floor and entered from the foot of the bed. Trailing kisses up Quatre's body from the tips of his toes, which twitched and elicited a giggle. So his Quatre was ticklish, he made a mental note, as shapely calves received the same loving brush of lips. Quatre's breath caught as Trowa took his time worshipping the flesh of his inner thighs, before deliberately bypassing the center of Quatre's desire which pulsed red with lust and longing.

"TROWA!" Quatre sobbed, this was sheer torture on his senses.

Trowa only smiled and seized Quatre's lips. "What now? I gave you your bath." Trowa teased and Quatre's breath came in near gasps.

“You are evil. Do something or stop this torture.” Quatre cried, his fingers digging into Trowa’s back as he unsuccessfully tried to pull him closer. Trowa took his hands and pinned them down on either side of his head.

“Now, now. Let me have my fun. I am not making love to you tonight. You are nowhere near ready for it, nor are you strong enough yet. And before you protest, I mean it Quatre. Just let me do this for you, I want to. At least give me this much, let me worship you.” Trowa said lowering his head to Quatre’s collarbone to nip and kiss along the line of flesh and jutting bone.

“Quit thinking about me and my desires, and just lie back and enjoy this. Be selfish just once. You can return the favor sometime when you’re more up to the task.” Trowa chided as Quatre’s hand that had snaked free reached for Trowa’s equally hardened length. Quatre whimpered as Trowa captured him and held him prisoner once more.

“But...” Quatre began and was silenced by Trowa’s kiss.

“No buts. Just let me do this.” Trowa said trailing his kisses down Quatre’s chest. Pausing to suckle and nip at the puckered nubs, hardened with pleasure. From there his kisses burned like fire as he kissed down a firm hard stomach towards his ultimate goal. Without warning, Trowa took him whole and Quatre let out a cry of ecstasy and his hands now free entwined into Trowa’s still damp hair.

Swirling his tongue around it’s apex, Trowa began a slow bobbing motion, drawing out moans and whimpers from his golden lover. Quatre’s hips began to thrust of their own accord and Trowa pinned them down to the bed with his hands. Refusing to let Quatre exert himself at all. Trowa’s motion increased in tempo, and Quatre’s cries became strangled as Trowa sent his sensory epicenter into overload.

Quatre’s body became rigid and Trowa furiously worked to bring Quatre to the peak and topple him over. Quatre’s hands in his hair clenched and Trowa felt salty warmth fill his throat as Quatre’s voice nearly screamed his name in pain. Trowa never let Quatre escape his lips until every precious drop of his essence was devoured. Trowa taking all that was his beloved’s love and pleasure inside him like a drug. Trowa felt heady, extremely aroused, and damn near smug, as Quatre became a boneless heap beneath him.

“T-t-Trowa.” Quatre stumbled over his lovers name as he came down off the highest of highs.

“Go to sleep now Quatre.” Trowa said pulling up a sheet to cover his sweaty lover. A chill was the last thing Quatre needed to catch.

“But...” Quatre began to protest again and Trowa laid a finger to his lips to still his chatter.



# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Nine

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*“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”*

**“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen**

Trowa awoke and blinked the sleep out of his eyes, once again, even in a bed this size, Quatre had managed to move around enough to where Trowa was perched on the edge about to topple off. Trowa chuckled softly as he quietly rolled out of bed. “We’re going to have to work on this arrangement bed hog.” Trowa mused to himself as he pulled on his breeches and tunic. Quatre was still blissfully asleep, and any thought Trowa may have entertained about returning to bed soon vanished, as Quatre unconsciously moved into Trowa’s recently vacated spot sighing as the leftover warmth was nestled into. “So that’s the reason, you don’t want to cuddle with me, you want my body heat.” Trowa teased his sleeping lover as he tiptoed out of the room.

It appeared everyone was just crawling out of bed as well. Duo was half dressed, his unbound hair askew as he fought to stay awake and not doze back off where he sat curled up on the couch. Heero came walking in from the opposite direction of Trowa, considerably more alert as he shoved a steaming cup under Duo’s nose. Duo mumbled something akin to a thank you and just stared into the cup for a moment trying to come around.

Heero nodded a silent greeting to Trowa who returned the gesture as he sought the source of the remedy to cure his growling stomach. He found it in short order, following his nose and the sound of clinking cutlery from beyond another panel opposite the sleeping quarters. Sally was setting a pot to stew and grinned merrily as Trowa entered.

“How is he this morning?” Sally asked and Trowa found a mug and the coffee and answered while pouring.

“Out like a light still.” He said smiling a little as he remembered the way he had sent his lover off to sleep in the first place.

“You didn’t wear him out did you?” Sally asked with a knowing smirk Trowa chuckled.

“I did thank you. I got him to sleep, you can thank me for it later.” Trowa said and Sally laughed heartily.

“Glad to hear it. Even if your methods of persuasion we’re not healer’s orders, at least he’s resting.” Sally said stirring the pot slowly. Dishing up a bowl of the porridge looking mixture and placing it in front of Trowa. “Eat up, I’m not about to let your health suffer because you’re too wrapped up looking after him.” Sally said and Trowa smiled.



Once everyone had eaten and retreated back into the main section of Peacemillion's living quarters, there was not much to do but relax further and wait as they sped towards their destination.

Duo and Trowa sat at the Gaming table over a game of chess. Wufei leaned against the wall watching the game intently. It was Duo's turn and he was staring at the board when Wufei's hand shot out and moved his piece.

"An excellent play." Trowa mused and Duo had to agree.

"Sometimes the best defense is a good offense." Wufei said matter-of-factly as their attention turned towards some commotion occurring on the other side of the room.

Zechs and Heero were sitting in chairs that faced each other, visor's sitting over their eyes as they battled in a simulation game. "You're fast, but not fast enough." Zechs taunted and Heero grunted.

"We'll see about that." Heero said as his fingers flew over the game joysticks in his hands.

"Incredible! Sally come look at these read-outs!" Noin said as they watched the game through a view screen. Both men piloted through frozen virtual wastelands, battling each other with impeccable skill. Zechs was a legend in real life for his piloting skills; he had assumed he'd gain a quick and easy victory over his human opponent. He was sadly mistaken and it was taking everything he had to match wits against Heero. The game ended in an agreed draw when both men were just plain exhausted from playing.

"We WILL finish this one of these days." Zechs said and Heero nodded in agreement. There would be a victor in this battle, it was too evenly matched not to battle it out until one or the other defeated his opponent. It was a matter of pride now neither man would back down until there was a clear and utter victory.

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Quatre slept for a solid twenty-four hours much to everyone's relief, and he awoke painfully hungry, but feeling more like himself than he had in the past few days. After devouring everything Sally placed in front of him he felt exceedingly better. But until he was one hundred percent again, Sally and Trowa refused to let him so much as lift a finger other than to lift a spoon to his mouth. Needless to say Quatre was getting quite agitated and was getting a touch of cabin fever by the time the alarm sounded that they were within sight of their destination.

Zechs resumed the pilot's seat and raised the hailing frequency to the Mag'ua'nac base. "This is lightening count requesting permission to deliver the cargo." He called in code and a deep booming voice answered.

“You are cleared for landing, docking bay forty seven.” Was the short response as the transmission ended. The coordinates flashed up and Noin keyed them into the navigation console as Zechs followed her course setting.

They landed and pulled into the hangar that was virtually hidden in the vast waste of desert that surrounded it. From an aerial view, all this place would look like is a small desert oasis village. Small sandstone buildings clustered together in an unforgiving environment.

It seemed the entire population of the small Mag'ua'nac city had gathered to greet the shuttle. At the foot of the ramp off the shuttle Treize and Lady Une stood dressed in the muslin garments that the Mag'ua'nac people favored in the desert. Beside them stood their leader. A great tower of a man. His rich sun bronzed skin and golden eyes gleaming under black hair that grew like horns from his head and down his cheeks to form a rather angular appearance.

Zechs and Noin stepped out first and bowed regally to Rashid who dipped his head proudly in welcome. “And delivered by his grace from the void of space to his holy land. Welcome worthy friends. And whom do you bring to be tried for favor?” Rashid's voice carried like the toll of a great bell.

“Those who shall lead the people's of our galaxy free from tyranny.” Zechs answered and Rashid snorted.

“So let them be judged, if they be so worthy.” Rashid replied and Zechs and Noin parted to allow the others to descend to meet the Leader of the proudest warrior race in the galaxy. The first to emerge were Heero and Duo who walked unafraid towards the giant at the foot of the platform. They had been briefed about what was expected and what would happen.

Once at the bottom, Rashid's men with weapons at the ready moved to stand behind Heero and Duo. They were to remain silent and wait until Rashid told them what to do.

Wufei was next down the Ramp, Sally by his side. They took their places beside Heero and Duo. Trowa came next, and Rashid nodded once to the man on his right. His counterpart's eyes were shaded and he wore a crafty grin. “So it seems they CAN grow humans to a respectable height.” The be-speckled man quipped and Rashid chuckled.

“Abdul your manners my son.” Rashid said focusing his attention back up the platform.

Quatre was the last out, and he couldn't help it, the warmth of the sun beating down upon him was heaven sent and he raised his arms to it and drank in the heat as it infused his perpetually cold body. The entire congregation of Mag'ua'nacs gasped and began to fall to their knees, casting their eyes down to the ground in worshipful gestures. Rashid's jaw dropped as he too fell to his knees. Dragging Treize and Une down with him. The guards behind their



# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Ten

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Trowa stood with an unreadable look in his eyes as he stared at Quatre where he stood next to the Maguanac leader. A Prince? Quatre was a Prince? Okay it wasn’t that hard to believe not from the fastidious way Quatre had always maintained himself in the past. From his manners, to the way he made others feel like mere peasants in comparison, yet loved regardless of who they were. Seeing him as a real Prince was not as far-fetched as it seemed. But it still was a harsh pill to swallow. Would that change anything? More importantly would it change how Trowa fit into the puzzle, into Quatre’s life?

Worry and doubt and a cloud of despair began to creep into his chest and Quatre’s head whipped around and fixed him with that gaze of complete and un-wavering compassion. All doubt was instantly erased and Trowa had his answer, Quatre just smiled tenderly and Trowa’s heart leapt. The answer was no, nothing would change between them and relief flooded Trowa. He should never have entertained the doubt to begin with, he knew better than to doubt Quatre.

“Damn right. Don’t ever doubt how much I love you.” Came Quatre’s voice in his head and Trowa glared.

“STOP IT!” Trowa shouted back mentally and Quatre chuckled and turned to look up, way up at Rashid who stood beside him.

“Your Highness, we feared you lost forever. I cannot begin to express the feeling of joy you bring us at your safe return.” Rashid said and Quatre smiled.

“I’m glad to finally be home. However, before I can truly say I am what you believe me to be. Is there not a matter of a trial to be dealt with first?” Quatre said and Rashid looked aghast.

“Surely Highness, you don’t think we would... Test you?” Rashid stammered and Quatre nodded.

“Yes, How do you know I’m even worthy of this faith you put in me, let me prove it to you. Let me prove it to myself. I have only dreams and vague memories to serve me, Give me your trial as you would have done had my face not revealed my heritage.” Quatre said and Rashid looked about to have a seizure. One did not put one’s monarch through the trial; it just was not done, not ever.

“But highness, it is too dangerous. We lost you once when we tried to send you to shelter with your mother and sister. I have lived with that failure and shame my whole life. Please do not ask me to put you in danger a second time.” Rashid said his head bent in shame. Quatre reached out and laid a hand on his massive forearm.

“If I am who you believe me to be, does your faith in me doubt my ability to overcome?” Quatre asked and Rashid vehemently shook his head.

“Nay your highness, it’s just, just...” Rashid sought for the words to accurately say what he felt and Quatre laughed merrily.

“When will people not judge a book by it’s cover. Damn I hate being this short.” Quatre quipped and Abdul had to stifle a laugh as his father looked at Quatre in utter disbelief.

“You, you...” Rashid hemmed and hawed.

“Read your thoughts? Yes, to avoid that do not think so clearly. Isn’t that right Trowa?” Quatre asked over his shoulder. Trowa grumbled something inaudible about pickpockets as he crossed his arms and glared. Quatre merely sparkled with mirth and turned back to Rashid in all seriousness.

“I may appear to be frail and without resource. I am not so weak as I look. I make up for my lack of stature in other ways.” Quatre said reaching out, and with one finger on Rashid’s chest, the man literally lifted off the ground where he stood and was thrown into his son who captured his stunned father in his arms before he could fall. Quatre did not seem amused but deadly serious as he stood before Rashid and Abdul. He had a regal air about him that fairly bristled.

“Now, I say again. Give me your trial.” Quatre said and Rashid bowed.

“As you wish, your highness.” Rashid said as he stood to his full height and bellowed loud enough to rattle one’s bones. “Make ready the trial.” He said and Quatre returned to stand with the others in the line. Trowa wanted to either smack his stubborn lover, or kiss him senseless. It was a bold move, and Trowa was proud of him, yet he could have avoided it all together.

“I have to prove it to them Trowa, I have to prove it to myself. Am I who they think I am? Am I all that my sister would tell me I could be? I thought they were just bedtime stories tales to make me forget the horror around us. I think she was trying to prepare me for something, for this. I won't know unless I go through with this.” Quatre said quietly and Trowa nodded once solemnly.

“I know, and I know you can do it, but must I remind you I will worry anyway?” Trowa said softly and Quatre snaked his hand into his lover's and squeezed. Trowa gently squeezed back as they continued the rest of the way towards their destination in silent procession hand in hand.

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That evening around a large bonfire the trial council gathered. Five young men stood wearing naught but a simple loincloth to protect them. Rashid sat in the middle of forty men twenty on either side. Each man would ask a task to the men on trial. If one task was failed, all five would be killed. Rashid eyes wandered toward the young blonde man in the middle. He had been but a babe when last he cast eyes upon him.

Since they day of the founding, the Mag'ua'nac people had looked to a human monarch. For it was a human who had brought them peace, and a human who had taught them the ways of honor and loyalty, she who had taught them that love and forgiveness were virtues worth living for and dying to protect.

They had been a warrior race bent on killing each other, tribes of men hunting one another without purpose. Then the ship arrived, from the heavens came a group that had called themselves pioneers. They were Colonists from a far off place and from another galaxy. They had been lost and blown off course and had chosen this place to call home. Among them was the founder. She who had with the grace of her spirit and the kindness of her hand had reached out and embraced the native Mag'ua'nac peoples and taught them how to remain proud warriors yet rejoice in peace.

She alone was able to adapt to the harsh environment, and as her fellows perished one by one, she showed a bravery and courage the Mag'ua'nacs came to deeply respect. They sheltered her, and she in turn loved them and taught them her gentle ways. The King loved her fiercely, and from their union came the first of many human blooded monarchs to rule.

Then the War began, when first the Oz'rialites began to move outward from their seat of power in the Republic. Turning it from a peaceful democracy to a harsh dictatorship. It was the Founder, who turned them back from their world. Using her gifts to repel the invaders from her home, to protect those she loved she sacrificed herself.

She used her entire being to create a wall of protection around the desert moon. Only those of honest intent could get through. Then with her dying breath she bade her people to create the trial of honor just in case her shield failed to last. She bade them mark well the ones who would honor them and be loyal in return. To those whom would seek to harm her beloved people she bade her warriors to destroy the evil.

Her final vow was engraved for all time upon her effigy by the King's own hand in memory of his beloved wife. He did this so he could look upon her final words and hope he lived to see the day.

"I will watch over thee and continue to love thee for eternity. Should evil once again try to conquer our home, I shall battle the heaven's themselves and return to you. For my love for you my people knows no limits, and no barriers. No one, not even a god can rob you of your faith. Have faith in me as I have faith in you. Until I am home, my love will shelter you, my love shall protect you."

Sadly, the King never saw that day arrive and died a sad and heartbroken man. Now a millennia later, it seemed her vow to return was coming to pass as the young man who bore her face stood with his fellows, ready to face the Trial of honor his many a distant and great Grandmother had decreed.

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Rashid ran a hand over his eyes; he remembered the day Quatre had been born. No Mag'ua'nac Monarch had borne a golden child before Quatre. Seeing his brilliance had made Rashid weep. The shaman's hailing him as the founder re-born to protect her people once again. Word spread, and fearing for the Prince's safety, they sought to hide the human slave turned Queen, and her children. The king himself had placed his beloved Wife, daughter and newborn son in Rashid's care and sent them on a journey to find sanctuary.

Sadly, they did not make it far before the Oz'rialites had attacked the vessel. The Queen placed her children in a life pod and jettisoned them out into space, then shoved the unconscious Rashid into the second and final one. Sacrificing herself to save those she loved. Now her son, was asking him to put him to the test, Rashid was almost overcome with grief at having to do so, but he had faith, and by the founder he would not fail the lad a second time. He would do what he asked and live by his honor. If Quatre wanted this, then he would have it. He took a deep breath, swallowed his fear and called the trial to order.

"Stand you before us as one, five men of one purpose and one goal. Before you accept a trial, know this. Should one fail, you all fail. Use your wits and use each other's strength's. Do not tread lightly, failure is death, do you accept the first trial?" Rashid asked and Quatre took one step forward.

"We accept." He said and Rashid nodded.

"So be it." He said reaching before him and selecting one of forty slips of paper. "The first trial is this. For a man to survive he needs water, find you a source in the desert and live. Fail and the sands will consume you. But where can thee find a source of life's elixir? This you must discover before you perish." Rashid said with despair as the five young men were herded into a shuttle were taken to the center of the desert and left there with no protection. "You have three days before you will die. We have you under surveillance, we will return to collect the survivors, if any, in three days time if you find a source within this timeframe. If you do not succeed before your time has run out, you will be left to the

desert for all eternity.” Rashid said before five young men were left half naked and alone in the middle of the desert.

“Great, just great. You could have given us some fucking clothes!!!” Duo hollered as the shuttle vanished. “Not only are we gonna burn, but have you ever tried getting sand out of the crack of your ass?” He said and Quatre just shook his head and chuckled. Heero looked annoyed, Wufei looked pissed off as usual, and Trowa just, well looked like Trowa always looked.

Trowa looked at Duo and sighed. “I think if we are being monitored, when we find what they told us to find it will not be three days Duo. And in fact, it won’t be three minutes.” He said as he walked over to a nearby cactus. “For here is what they told us to find.” Trowa said as he carefully avoided the spines and broke off a piece of the plant. Water poured from it and Trowa cupped his hands and drank. Motioning for the rest to follow suit.

“How did you know water was in there?” Duo asked and Wufei snorted.

“Baka, the man calls storms and you wonder how he knows how to find water? Are you sure we need to trust Duo with our lives? His ignorance astounds me.” Wufei said and Duo growled and his eyes flashed.

“It was an honest question you pompous ass.” Duo snarled and Quatre ran between them.

“Stop it both of you. If we fight amongst ourselves we will surely never get through this. We all have different strengths we must trust each other beyond all doubt to be able to use those strengths to the benefit of each other. Please.” Quatre pleaded and everyone nodded, he was right, they needed to stay focused and wait to tease and fight each other after the trial was over.

In the distance the engine of the shuttle could be heard getting closer. “See, Trowa was right. We passed the first test. Here they come.” Quatre said and Duo sighed.

“Great, one down thirty-nine to go yet. What’s next?” Duo said sarcastically. “Let’s hope it involves clothes.” He said as adjusted the loincloth yet again. “This thing is just riding up my ass something fierce.” He added and Quatre just grinned, leave it to Duo to bring levity to what could be a terrifying circumstance just when you needed it for relief.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Eleven

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Once retrieved from their first task they were brought back before the council. “Impressive but the first task was relatively simple.” Rashid said sternly, but there was no masking the relief and pride in his eyes as he reached a paw into the slips of paper to draw a new task. “Impossible! Who put this in here?” He bellowed as he stared at the paper in his hands. Quatre cleared his throat.

“I think it is for us to decide if it’s impossible. Read the task.” Quatre said and Rashid snorted.

“Forgive me your highness, but it is impossible for a human. Even I cannot wrestle and win against Ha’bib.” Rashid said and Quatre followed Rashid’s gaze where it rested on a great bear of a man who cracked his knuckles and Quatre had to fight against the smile that wanted to burst across his face.

“Heero?” Quatre asked turning to look at the wiry young man beside him. A ghost of a smile tugged on his lips and he nodded.

“Task accepted.” Heero said stepping forward. Rashid looked horrified but his hands were tied. The task had been accepted.

Ha’bib stepped forward and his laughter was like an earthquake. “This task you shall fail.” He said as he looked down upon the young man before him.

“Think that if you will. But I plan on living tonight.” Heero said getting his feet planted firmly, waiting for the massive man to strike.

“The rules are simple, first man pushed from the ring is the winner.” Rashid said as he drew a circle on the ground around the contestants. Duo stood, arms folded across his chest, a smirk plastered on his face. This was going to be easy.

No one could knock Heero over when he stood like that; this mountain man was about to get one hell of a shock.

“Begin!” Rashid shouted and Ha’bib lunged forward, and then lost all forward thrust as Heero’s hands shot out and literally gave a gentle push. Ha’bib stumbled as he was thrust backward and the air rushed out of his lungs. The boy barely touched him and he was teetering on the edge of the circle. Fury burned in Ha’bib’s eyes and he surged forward again screaming a battle cry of rage as he gained momentum.

Heero let him get right up on him before he crouched and as the great bulk of Ha’bib’s chest came over him, Heero stood up, lifting a confused Ha’bib up on his shoulders. Heero walked over to the edge of the circle, and dumped the man without the ring’s boundary unceremoniously. Heero never even broke a sweat and victory was his.

Everyone stood in utter silence, no one had ever won against Ha’bib, and this small human had done it effortlessly. Ha’bib stood and bowed low to Heero. “I am humbled, we must do this again sometime under less harrowing circumstances.” He said and Heero nodded before returning to stand with his fellows.

Rashid’s hand trembled with a mixture of shock, disbelief, and awe as he reached into the jar for the next task. He didn’t know what to make of events, it seemed impossible for these young men to be capable of these feats. Yet, in less than an hour they had already completed two tasks. He cleared his throat and read from the paper in his hands. “Bring out the coals. Mind over matter is your next task. One can overcome great obstacles by using naught but the power of the mind. I charge one of you to walk across the coals, if you believe and have faith you will not be burned. If you falter, the very skin from your feet will be consumed.” Rashid said as red-hot coals were laid in a path of fire. Several of the men sat with bellows to fuel the heat and the flames. This time Wufei stepped forward.

“I accept your task.” He said as he sat for a moment and meditated. Everyone stared in silence as they waited for Wufei to move. When he did stand, it was as if he was still in a trance but he moved with a fluid purpose. Quatre changed his sight slightly to peer at Wufei’s aura and he nearly squeaked when his eyes caught a glimpse of Wufei’s inner power. Instead of skin, Wufei appeared to have iridescent scales; it was as if he wore the skin of a dragon as he made his way toward the burning path of coals. Quatre clasped Trowa’s hand and gasped, if only Trowa could see this, it was a beautiful thing to behold and it took Quatre’s breath away.

Fearlessly, the dragon-cloaked Wufei tread upon the now white-hot coals. Slowly and regally he crossed, not even a hair on his body singed as he crossed and stepped off the path and sat down once more. His hands folded before him and his index fingers formed a steeple with his hands as he laid his brow upon them. With a slow and deliberate manner, Wufei removed his armor before fully coming out of his trance. “That was beautiful.” Quatre sighed and Trowa shook his head.

“Beautiful? It looked painful.” Trowa said and Quatre shook his head.

“You couldn’t see it, he felt nothing. His power is ancient; I’ve never seen anything so unbelievably beautiful. He is born of dragons.” Quatre said as Wufei stepped within earshot.

“I come from a long line of dragons.” He said with a bow and Quatre bowed back.

“So I can see. It’s an honor to know you Wufei.” Quatre said and Wufei smiled slightly.

“As it is my honor to know you. Your power is much older than mine, and you wear it well.” He said and Quatre smiled.

“Are you two done with the compliments already? You two look about ready to paw each other or something.” Duo said and Trowa snorted. Wufei however growled and turned around to glare at Duo.

“Respect you moron. Obviously a concept that escapes your feeble one track mind.” Wufei said folding his arms across his chest defiantly. “Besides, I am a man with a mate thank you.” He added securing his manly pride and honor.

“And what a woman. You’d better NOT paw anything else, she’ll rip your dick off and feed it to you with her bare hands.” Duo added and Wufei could only nod in agreement. This at least Duo had right for a change. Sally was definitely not a woman he cared to cross. He much preferred being in her good graces. Powers or not, he was afraid to think what she’d do to him while he slept if he ever scorned her affections. Not like he wanted to in the first place. He was quite happily under that woman’s bewitching charms.

He looked over to where she was sitting between Treize and Lady Une. She looked worried and he threw her a tender smile. She let out a visible sigh and Wufei fought the smirk that wanted to lift his mouth into a smile. She may seem harsh and tough as nails, but she had her moments of tenderness, and thankfully she chose him to bestow those treasures upon. He’d not betray her secret, the silly softhearted woman. Oh how he loved her. His attention was diverted from his beautiful mate as Rashid once again took center stage.

“I shall draw one final task for the night. I will read it to you, and if you accept we will commence with it come first light.” Rashid said as he reached into the slips and withdrew the next task.

“By the founder, I have never seen trials written with such vindictive hands. We will have words on these later men. You shame me, the point is to try them, not purposefully try and kill them.” Rashid grumbled as Quatre laid a hand on his forearm.

“Keep your faith, we won’t fail.” Quatre said softly. “I have a feeling a higher power directed the hands of your men. Do not blame them, as you can see the tasks seem to be tailored to us in one way or another, read the next challenge.” Quatre said and Rashid nodded and clearly spoke the next trial.

“Fear can turn a man to stone, or send a herd of desert beasts into a cloud of chaos and destruction. Face you this chaos and not freeze in fear? Stand in the way of the stampede and face death. If fear roots you to the spot, death will claim you. Can you temper your fear and survive death’s dance?” Rashid asked knowing this task was surely impossible. Even if one ran, there was no way to escape a stampeding herd of desert beasts.

“Man, I am death. Bring it on. It’s not like I don’t see that reflection every damn day when I look in the mirror. Task accepted.” Duo said and Rashid sighed. This bright young man was unnerving. His jovial air, and dashing good looks and charm could hardly be death’s visage. Then again Rashid was quickly learning that with these five young men, looks were very, very deceiving.

“So be it, at dawn you will face the trial.” Rashid said motioning for his guards. “Take them to their beds, feed them and let them rest. They have earned it this night at least.” Rashid said and they were led towards the central building and escorted to cells. But they were cells in the loosest sense of the word. Small, but comfortable cots awaited them, as did trays of fresh fruit and juice. The doors were not barred, and only a few guards were posted at the entrance to the cells.

Duo collapsed onto his cot and yanked the loincloth off him as he wrapped a sheet around his middle instead. “Man, that thing is chafing the crack of my ass. The sooner we get through these damn trials the better.” He said as Heero flopped down beside him.

“It can wait as far as I’m concerned. I don’t like it Duo, you know how using your power against only one can affect you. Using it against an entire herd of panicked animals? Why did you accept?” Heero asked concerned and Duo sighed.

“Because I had to and you know it. Quatre’s right, it’s like these tasks were specifically written with us in mind. That one had my name written all over it. We’re being tested, and it’s my turn it seems.” Duo said and from the door a soft clearing of a throat turned their heads to see Quatre standing in the doorway.

“I’m sorry to disturb you both, but I’m worried.” Quatre said coming in, Trowa and Wufei behind him.

“Eh? You’re worried? You could have fooled me.” Duo said and Quatre sighed.

“No please, listen. I’ve been thinking. These questions DO seem directed at us. I fear the Mag’ua’nacs are being used. By whom however I don’t know. It’s not Treize, or the others. I can sense that much. They are just as worried about us as Rashid is. Something else is at work here. I can feel it. Something is wrong; something, or someone wants us to fail. We’re being set up. These tasks are simple for us, a basic testing of our skills. They are going to get a lot harder. We

need to stay together, and we need to find out who is behind this before we do come across something that is beyond our skill.” Quatre said and Wufei nodded.

“I concur, this does seem like a trap, or rather like someone is gathering information to use against us at a later date. There is a spy I’d wager loose among these peoples. I fear their founder’s shield has failed.” Wufei said as Trowa poured out juice into five cups.

“It failed a long time ago. Before I was born, that was why I was sent from here. That much I do know. My sister would tell me we had to flee from home because the veil had turned to lace, and the evil was slipping through the holes. Pretty vague descriptions to tell a four year old; only now do I understand what she was trying to tell me. Father and Mother knew it too, that’s why they risked everything to get me away from here. I know I’m home, this was truly where I was born, I can feel it and damn it I’m not going to run anymore.” Quatre said slamming his fist down on the table.

“We’re not running anymore. I’m by your side and I’ll stand with you.” Trowa said handing Quatre a cup and placing his palm against Quatre’s cheek.

“I’m not running anymore either. I’ve been running my whole life. Fuck it, count me in too buddy.” Duo said standing and Heero stood in unison.

“Me too. I will not back down anymore. It’s time to make a stand.” Heero said and Wufei stood solemnly.

“I have never trusted my life to anyone. I have been hiding and surviving until now. I give that up, and I am placing my trust in you. For good or for ill I know not, but the winds of fate are changing and it is up to us to dictate which path we allow it to carry us along. I stand with you, brothers.” Wufei said and all five men raised their glasses.

“Brothers, we stand as one. No one will break us; Let our friendship and unity stand as a beacon in the night. Together we will prevail.” Quatre said and they drank to their vows of friendship and trust.

“Huh, toasting with grape juice. Not wine, but I guess it’s better than nothin’” Duo said grinning and Quatre chuckled.

“Um Duo, you have a purple mustache.” Quatre giggled and Wufei snorted.

Duo just licked his upper lip and grinned. “At least it matches my eyes.” He said batting them at Wufei. “You love me, admit it.” He said and Wufei scowled.

“Never.” He said folding his arms across his chest.

“I knew it.” Duo said with a smirk as he downed his cup.

“Humph” Was Duo’s only rebuttal before five very tired men decided rest was in order. They could plan more on the morrow, after Duo’s trial.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Twelve

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

The false light of pre-dawn filtered in through the narrow slat in the wall that served as a window in the room Quatre was sharing with Trowa. He lay awake, as he had done all night pondering the events that were looming over them all. Trowa’s deep and steady breathing beside him in his cot where they had pushed the two separate beds together was a soothing lullaby for his stress and insomnia. Movement just beyond the window caught Quatre’s attention and he lay perfectly still, trying to focus on the shadow just beyond.

A small glint of feeble light on steel was all the warning he had before a knife came flying into the room to imbed itself with a thud where Quatre’s head had been just seconds before. Instantly Trowa was alert from the sound and like a flash he was at the window, his arm reaching through the thin slat to grip the assassin by the throat.

“Trowa stop, let go.” Quatre came running over as Trowa’s fury burned in his eyes. The figure in Trowa’s clutches gasped and sputtered for air. Quatre stepped closer and peered at the person through the window. The auburn haired young woman was rapidly running out of air.

“Trowa, let her go, she wasn’t trying to kill me, but send us a message. Let her go.” Quatre soothed and Trowa released his grip and the woman gasped for air.

“Good grip.” She said with a light air but serious undertone. “Just read the message in the Hilt.” She said before running away into the night.

Trowa glared at the knife; standing straight and tall where it had landed between where their heads had been resting not moments before. “She’s got good aim.” Quatre mused as he pulled the knife free from the cot frame and unscrewed the pommel. Inside a slip of paper was rolled up and Quatre let it fall from the hollow hilt into his hand. In barely legible writing was a warning. And Quatre’s blood turned cold as Trowa hovered at his elbow.

“What does it say Quatre?” He asked and Quatre handed him the note. Trowa shook his head. “I can’t read.” He said and Quatre sighed, he should have known that. Education was not on a slave’s list of duties, it was something that they we’re lucky if they could learn. Quatre had been very lucky with Instructor H; it appeared Trowa had not been schooled in the same things during their time apart. Thankfully, the slave girl who had just visited knew enough to get her message across. Quatre sighed and read the note to Trowa, cleaning up the broken and fragmented language as he read aloud.

“Beware of my Mistress. She’s not what she seems. I am forced to pretend to be her friend and willing travel companion when I am really her slave. She’s under-gone surgery to change her appearance, but not a drop of Mag’ua’nac, nor human blood runs in her veins. She’s an Oz’rialite, and a spy. She’s tracking the blonde one. That’s how she knew you were all here on this moon. She’s followed you ever since he was removed from the cells in the capitol. Under the skin behind his left ear they’ve implanted a tracking device. Destroy it now, and alert her you know of it’s presence. Leave it where it is, it’s already too late. The Grand Chancellor Duke Dermail already knows where you are and has ordered my Mistress to terminate you.

My Mistress is a witch, and she’s influencing the minds of the Trial council. All those tasks are by her design. They will only get more deadly until you fail. To release the will power and minds of the council, apart from Rashid whom she cannot control for some reason, she must be killed. I can do no more for you I fear, I’ve already done more than I dare. She’s going under the name of Sylvia Noventa, but her true identity is Dorothy Catalonia, she is Duke Dermail’s granddaughter. Killing her will not be easy nor without consequence. If she fails to contact him nightly with a report of your skills, rest assured an entire fleet of warships are standing ready and will be headed to this moon within the hour of her first missed report. Please stay safe I’m counting on you. Your friend, Cathy.” Quatre read aloud and Trowa hissed threw his teeth.

“You were right after all Quatre. I wish by the Maker you’d have been in error this time.” Trowa said with a heavy sigh as he sat with a boneless heavy weight upon his cot running tired and frustrated fingers through his long bangs.

“And the worst of it is love, if we inform the Mag’ua’nacs of this, and they alter what she’s written she’ll know WE know. Our only option is to carry on as if we are ignorant to her and trust Treize and Zechs to flush her out and handle her without killing her. We’re painted into a corner, and the only exit is the path she leaves for us to follow.” Quatre said and Trowa nodded.

“We’d better tell the others at least.” Trowa said taking Quatre’s hand and laying a tender kiss to his palm. “But no matter what path she shoves us down, I refuse to lose you a second time.” Trowa said and Quatre couldn’t keep the whimper of love that squeezed past his throat. As he wrapped his arms around Trowa’s shoulders and stepped forward to hold Trowa against his chest. Quatre ran loving fingers through the soft down of Trowa’s hair.

“You won’t lose me Trowa, not ever.” Quatre sighed as Trowa’s arms wrapped firmly around his waist.

“Likewise.” Trowa said planting a kiss on Quatre’s abdomen before reluctantly standing and taking Quatre’s hand in his own. “Come on, we don’t have much time to warn the other’s before they come and get us. It’s nearly dawn now.” Trowa said leading Quatre through their door and across the hall towards where Duo and Heero were sleeping. Or supposed to be sleeping. The muted sounds behind the door stopped Trowa’s hand mere inches from knocking. A



He reached out towards the strongest source and he shifted on his feet as he sensed the twitching tension just beyond the horizon. He turned to face in the direction of that mass of life energy. His heart quickened its pace as he found among the various individual signs of life the most potent. This was the beast he had to control; this was the one the others would follow blindly. Slowly he drank in the majesty and sheer power of the magnificent creature. Duo's blood pumped through his veins, and he reveled in the euphoria as he meshed his being into the unsuspecting host.

Duo's eyes shot open as he felt the surge of panic. Then Duo heaved taking great lungfuls of air as he felt the beast burst into a deadly run. Fear gripped Duo and he swallowed it; it wasn't his fear, but that of the beast he had attached himself to. Closer, stronger, faster, overwhelming panic, run, run, urgency to get away, Duo fought the sensations and focused on the cloud of dust that grew larger on the horizon. The Mag'ua'nacs were driving the beasts in his direction, herding the stampede closer, ever nearer to where he stood, virtually naked and unprotected.

"Focus, Focus, don't lose it Duo." He said to himself as he felt the bile rise in his throat. The beasts were in a frenzy and foaming at the mouth. Duo's skin vibrated with terror. The ground shook beneath his feet, and the sounds of thunder in a cloudless sky began to rumble in his ears. Duo widened his stance and held up his arms, stretching his being thin as a strand of thread as he sent more of himself into the creatures that drew near.

Eyes wide open; he could at last make out the mass of black dots along the horizon, dots that took on the shape of massive grayish black bovine like beasts. Long manes flapping behinds them as they ran towards him, faces resembling that of boars with long curved tusks protruding out either side of their mouths. Incredible life forces surrounded him, and Duo smirked. "Fuck me it's a shame such power is so damn ugly. Yeeesh. Talk about faces only a mother could love." Duo commented as he singled out the Desert Beast he was connected to and fixed his gaze upon the animal. "Right buddy, here we go." Duo said as he took a strangle hold of the beast's life force.

The creature reared and broke away from the pack, darting sharply to the right, and just as Duo suspected, the rest of the creatures followed him. Again Duo pulsed with energy and the animal let out a cry and again twisted back on itself. Making another sharp right, heading BACK the way it came. The rest followed Duo felt the creature's confusion. "It's all right buddy, just go back the way you came. There's nothing there but some big burly looking dudes who are about to shit themselves." Duo smirked as he loosened his hold on the creature slowly. Then severed the link entirely as the creatures once more vanished beyond the horizon.

Fatigue swept over Duo almost instantly. The surge of power rushing out of his body revealing just how much of his own power he'd expended during the trial. It was impossible to gauge how much of his own resources he was using up when his whole body hummed with the energy of other life forces. It got lost in the mix, and like a marionette that had suddenly had its strings cut, Duo fell into a heap on the sand.

He was too tired to even speak, as his vision blurred and his eyes began to water from the blinding sun now fully shining upon the burning sands. He'd never tackled so many life forces all at once before, and he had pushed himself beyond his limits unknowingly. He felt strong arms lift him up out of the sand.

"Baka." Came Heero's gruff, but concerned sounding rebuttal. "I knew this would happen. You could have killed it easier." Heero said and Duo turned his eyes toward the sound of Heero's voice and he smiled softly. Heero sighed. "I

know, I know. For the self styled God of Death, you sure are reluctant to wield that scythe. It was an animal Duo.” Heero said and Duo sighed.

“It was still a life Heero.” Duo said as he succumbed to his fatigue and literally passed out in Heero’s arms.

“And because you cherish it so much, you’d rather kill yourself to preserve it, Stupid fool. You may be an idiot, but I love you for it. The maker help me I’m in love with a suicidal madman.” Heero muttered. “You make me so proud.” Heero added softly into Duo’s sweat dampened hair as he kissed a temple lovingly; tears running down his cheeks from pain filled and worried deep blue eyes. Duo was no God of Death; he was a God who just happened to be able to wield the power life. That was a big difference in Heero’s point of view, but then he’d never had to cope with the kind of pressure that sort of gift oppressed it’s owner with.

Duo had that weight sitting on his shoulders and he bore it well, despite his claims to the contrary. Heero lifted his limp lover in his arms, and carried him back to where the shuttle was waiting to take them back to the city. The next trial was waiting for them there, but first and foremost, Duo needed to recover from this one. And Heero was going to make sure Duo had all the rest he needed before having to face yet another challenge. His glare dared the Mag’ua’nac leader to contradict him. Rashid only motioned them into the back of the shuttle and he piloted them silently back to the city.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Thirteen

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Cathy nervously sat off in the corner listening as her Mistress related the morning’s events to her Grandfather.

“He did what?” Demail demanded and Dorothy fed him the surveillance film via the link.

“It’s all there Grandsire, all of it. I’ll tell you again, you had better not dismiss these humans. They are more dangerous than you are giving them credit for.” Dorothy said calmly her eyebrows twitching with her annoyance.

“So give them a challenge they cannot overcome. Admittedly they are more powerful than I dared credit a human capable of, but regardless they are still naught but rejects from a genetic mistake.” Demail snorted and Dorothy looked grim.

“So you say, but even the smallest virus learns how to adapt and take over. What our Ancestors did on that blue planet to spark their evolution may have been a seemingly small mistake then, but it seems it will mean our ultimate folly if we don’t stop them now. They managed to evolve enough to travel back to their creators, do you not think they cannot evolve beyond us?” Dorothy asked and Demail cackled.

“If I thought you serious, I’d hail you a heretic. They’ve not the brainpower enough to evolve that far. They are pitifully stupid creatures inherently, twas luck they got as far as they did, but look how easily they fell again. That was a thousand years ago when they ventured into this galaxy, a thousand years ago when we crushed their planet and sent them scattering like seeds in the wind. They stopped evolving then, now they are the cockroaches of civilization, tis merely survival for them now. What you are seeing is survival instinct my dear Granddaughter. Crush it, and they’ll crawl back under their rocks in due order. Humans are predictable to say the least.” Demail said and Dorothy laughed.

“Too true, too true. There will be no more trials tonight, the longhaired male almost lost to me today, so he sleeps. Tomorrow I will take out the one who eluded you. I must admit for a human, he was clever in not letting you know he had talent. But he will not be clever enough this time. Now we know the truth, we will undo him, no more physical

beatings for this one. I will shatter his center. I know his weakness.” Dorothy said and Demail raised an eyebrow.

“Which is?” He asked intrigued.

“He cares. His heart will shatter tomorrow. His power comes from love, destroy what he loves most, and he will not survive the anguish. It will disable him, and I will run him through with my sword whilst he wallows in despair. He will beg to die.” Dorothy said resting her hand upon the hilt at her waist.

“And what does he love so much that it will bring such grief.” Demail asked and Dorothy smirked.

“He loves a great many things. The people here have already in a few short days worked their way into his unprotected emotional nature. The men with him he clings to even stronger, but not so much as the one they call Trowa; The storm dancer, even a fool could not miss the bond between them. Kill Trowa, and Quatre will crumble.” Dorothy said liking her lips.

From the corner Catherine had to choke back her sob. Then her fury was ablaze in her eyes as she pulled from her pocket a small disk. Flipping the button upon it a hologram image came to life of a toddler barely three years old. His cinnamon colored hair and emerald green eyes alight with childhood innocence. Beside him was the six-year-old version of herself. A brief happy moment of her childhood captured upon this holo-disk. The sound chip had long since broken as it had been bumped around often in the fourteen years she’d owned this treasure, but she could remember what it had said once. And she shut her eyes as a tear fell from the memory.

*“Look Caffy, Fuzzy Fowers.”*

*“Those are Dandelions, blow on them and you’ll spread the seeds.”*

*“Why bwoah on’dem? Wook, wind bwoah’s bettah.”*

Then the image swirled and thousands of white fluffy dandelion seeds suddenly burst to life as a sudden gentle wind blew across the plain. “Trowa.” Catherine said under her breath and wiped her tears as he pocketed her treasure once more. A few months after that hologram had been recorded, their parents had sold them into slavery, because they could no longer keep running, not with children getting in the way. That was the last time Catherine had ever seen her baby brother, she never dared dream she’d ever see him again.

But here he was, and there was nothing that could convince her that this Trowa was anything other than her long lost brother. The same hair, the same eyes, the same name, and the clincher, the same gift to call the wind. If it was coincidence it was a one in a billion chance. She liked the odds of him actually being her brother much better. And she was not about to lose him again, she doubted he would remember her, he had been so young when they were torn apart. But she remembered, and if she ever found the opportunity, she’d tell Trowa all about the baby he had been, and how much she desperately loved him. Dorothy came into the room, breaking Cathy free from her walk down

memory lane.

“Be off with you, I need my sleep. Wake me at dawn.” Dorothy ordered going into her room and slamming the door. Catherine nearly cheered. It was still mid-afternoon; it was time for her to see about getting in to talk to her brother. She had to warn him that his life was in serious danger and that he was the next target.

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The sun during the afternoon was brutal and most of the population sought shelter in the cool of indoors. Quatre however was sitting in the only swatch of sunshine slipping into his room soaking up the heat as Trowa lay sprawled on the floor in the shade, letting the cool of the tiles soothe him. “This climate suits you, I hope to the Maker however if you plan on me staying with you here, you find me a room with a climate control.” Trowa said and Quatre chuckled.

“I’m sure there are rooms with that technology here Trowa. But you’re not going to melt. The sun is glorious.” Quatre said and Trowa snorted.

“I’ll remind you of that when a sweaty stinky lover crawls in your bed. I am more than ripe.” Trowa grumbled rolling into a new spot on the floor since his body had heated up his last resting place.

“Yes, you are rather pungent.” Quatre teased and Trowa face down on the floor raised one finger and grunted.

“Only you Quatre can roam around here and not break a sweat. Even the Mag’ua’nacs flee the full force of the sun. You’re not human.” Trowa said and Quatre giggled.

“No, I’m not. I’m half Mag’ua’nac. Only my mother was human.” He said and Trowa sighed.

“That’s not what I meant, How come you’re never this little smart ass when we’re around the others?” Trowa asked fixing one green orb on the source of his affection and at this point in time, irritation.

Quatre shrugged. “I don’t know. I try to be, but I just can’t do it, I chicken out. I guess it just proves either a.) You don’t scare me or b.) It just goes to show how comfortable I am with you.” Quatre said and Trowa’s lips curved slightly.

“I hope it’s both a and b.” Trowa said tenderly and Quatre smiled.

"It is." Quatre reassured and Trowa put his head back down on the tiles. "I have a question now. Why is it you're never this talkative around the others." Quatre parried and Trowa shrugged where he lay.

"Nothing to say I suppose. Duo talks enough for the rest of us combined." Trowa said his voice muffled in the floor.

"Save for now, I hope he's alright. I never expected such a drain when he got back. This last trial was difficult for him." Quatre said slightly worried.

"He made it more difficult on himself. Heero told me what happened. I guess it's easy for Duo to kill, not so easy to reign in his power and keep it focused into a thin trickle. It's not so much he drains himself, but he bottles up potent energy rather than letting it burst free. What make him tired is fighting his instinct to kill. So when he finally does release the power, it leaves him bodily weary from having to hold it all in for so long." Trowa said and Quatre nodded.

"That's what I suspected." Quatre said and Trowa sighed.

"So why did you ask if you already knew the answer." Trowa countered and Quatre sighed.

"Speculation, not answers. Now I can stop wondering about it." Quatre said and Trowa shook his head.

"Trust your speculations Quatre. I've not seen you wrong yet." Trowa said and Quatre frowned.

"But I'm still human, I can make mistakes. And If I make a mistake, I may end up killing you all." Quatre said sadly and Trowa sat up and then stood and walked over to his love and lifted him from his chair and just held him in a tight embrace.

"You can stop that train of thought right there Quatre. Don't even think like that. You trust us right?" Trowa asked and Quatre nodded tears welling in his eyes. "Then know we trust you. We know when it's your turn you'll try your best, that's all we ask for. Win or lose we stand behind you. I stand behind you. I love you, and I won't have you already blaming yourself for a failure that hasn't happened yet, and may not happen. We cannot predict the future, not even you. So take it one moment at a time, one step at a time. That's all we can do love." Trowa said bending to place a kiss on Quatre's lips. Quatre leaned into the kiss and lost himself in the outpouring of love Trowa washed over him. But oh nothing was as beautiful as Trowa's love. It was brighter than the sun itself with warmth that was without comparison.

Quatre lost himself to the storm of sensations that electrified his center when a voice cleared its throat at the window and shattered the precursor of a tempest about to burst free. Trowa growled and whipped his head around to the window. "WHAT?!" He shouted and then glared. "You again, you have horrible timing." Trowa said flopping onto his cot and running a hand threw sweaty hair.

"So I can see lover boy. But I have to talk to you, it's important. Trowa, your life is in danger." Catherine said and Quatre chewed on his lip to avoid letting out the sob stuck in his throat.

"I knew it, get my weakness and you get me." Quatre said as a silent tear ran down his cheek. "Please come in and tell us what you know." Quatre said and Catherine nodded and disappeared from the window. Quatre felt himself pulled back against a hard chest and Trowa's arms wrapped around him from behind.

"Stop Quatre. I told you once; they were not going to part us a second time. I won't let it happen." Trowa comforted and Quatre turned and buried his face in that smooth chest and began to cry.

"I know you won't let it happen. But fate has a strange way of making things happen against our will. I can't lose you again." Quatre said fighting the urge to break down and weep.

"So we change fate." Was all Trowa had to say on the matter.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Fourteen

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

““Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

“So, that’s Demail’s game.” Treize said with a sigh as he sipped from his glass and set the perspiring glass down upon the table. Everyone had gathered to hear Catherine’s tale, including the one Mag’ua’nac Dorothy could not mentally influence. Rashid banged his hand upon the table nearly knocking Treize’s glass into his lap.

“This trial ends, I knew there was something amiss.” He rumbled and Quatre leapt to he feet.

“No, don’t you see? If we alter our course now, we bring Demail here faster. We have to continue like we do not know of her deceit. At least the five of us do, and you Rashid since you are the one that must read those ghastly tests to us. But, that does not stop the others from doing a little spying of their own. Keep watch on Dorothy. I have an idea.” Quatre said and his face lit up with a huge grin.

“I don’t know why I didn’t think of this sooner!” Quatre nearly danced.

“Well, we cannot read minds like you pick pocket. Care to enlighten the rest of us?” Trowa asked his chin resting on his hand where he sat draped over a chair. One leg casually hooked over the arm. Quatre stuck out his tongue.

“Later love, talk now.” Trowa thought and Quatre nearly choked as he glared as his love. Who at a glance looked only slightly bored, while evil visions we’re dancing in Quatre’s mind. “I told you, when you least expected it.” Trowa added as that scary half grin spread subtly across his lips. Quatre cleared his throat, and his voice only cracked on the first syllable or two.

“Stage a failure.” Quatre said and Zechs sat up.

“Excuse me?” The tall half-breed asked.

“I’m going to fail the next trial. Dorothy will think she’s won, pack up and go home. Then we can go through the trials for real, without her interference. Demail will think we’re out of the picture and his guard will drop. It’s a plan that will work.” Quatre said and Rashid cleared his throat.

“Two questions, highness. Well, one question, one request.” Rashid began and Quatre turned to face the Mag’ua’nac leader.

“First highness, the request. Staging the failure is indeed a brilliant idea, but I do not think we shall be resuming the trials. I think you have faced enough, and there’s naught my men can ask you to prove you have not already proved and surpassed remarkably already.” Rashid began but held up his hand as Quatre began to protest.

“No highness. It will be a waste of time we have precious little of that commodity, and it was and is very hard for me to be doing this to you in the first place. And that’s when I thought the trials would consist of nothing more than a few difficult riddles and stamina tests. Not this vicious outright punishment. I can bear no more, I cannot watch my wife’s brother’s son, my own kin suffer needlessly.” Rashid said and Quatre’s eyes grew wide.

“You’re my Uncle?” Quatre asked and Rashid nodded once proudly.

“By marriage, yes.” Rashid said smiling slightly.

“Well then I think you can drop all the ‘Highness’ stuff then, Uncle.” Quatre said merrily and Rashid chuckled.

“When I’ve earned that right, then I may consider that most generous of offers highness. I lost that privilege when I failed to protect you. By my honor I must earn that back.” Rashid said and Quatre only sighed, but he understood and wouldn’t press any further.

“What about your question then?” Quatre asked changing the subject.

“How will you go about staging the failure, more importantly your deaths? Just disappearing I’m afraid will not appease the one seeking your blood.” Rashid said and Trowa smiled.

"I can provide the cover, I think we can all play dead when you discover the bodies." He said and Rashid raised a brow. "There's plenty of sand to blow around. Sand storms are common here are they not?" Trowa asked and Rashid bellowed with laughter.

"They are indeed young one. But where do you find shelter in such a storm so you actually survive it?" Rashid asked and it was Quatre's turn.

"That's where I can be of help. I can erect a shield around the five of us to protect us from the wind and I can make it appear that we've, well, I can make us look pretty battered. It's simple illusionary magic there, a glamour, or an un-glamour in this case." Quatre said smiling.

"One problem Quatre." Catherine spoke up and Quatre turned to look at her. "Dorothy's a witch, she'll be able to sense your use of magic." Catherine threw the wrench into the works.

"She's right, we'll need to look ugly-au-naturel. Easy for Wu-man there, but I'm too good looking to be able to pull that off." Duo piped up from where he sat with exhausted eyes on the sofa. His grin at the dragon mage only made Wufei burn.

"Now, I'm ugly? Why you... you big... you...KISAMA! I give up on you! I think you are better when you are sleeping. You insolent pig, I'll inform my mate you think her judgment in men is lack luster." Wufei shouted then snorted his eye twitching with suppressed anger and Duo groaned.

"Damn Wufei, you are so easy to bait, Sally's right. Chill out dude before you bust a vein. I'm kidding. K-I-D-D-I-N-G, it's called a joke, humor, you tight ass. I don't MEAN it for crying out loud." Duo said with a sigh before flopping his head back down on the arm of the couch.

Treize shook his head. Those two were a constant source of amusement and irritation. He cleared his throat. "If we may continue? The young lass here is right, Dorothy will know both the storm and the deaths are a ruse if we use magic for the deception. This time we must think of an old fashioned method of deceit. I can think of one right now that will not only clear you all from having to deal with Miss Catalonia, but look real, for it will be real. It will also clear my name from Demail's suspicion." Treize began calmly interlacing his fingers where his hands rested upon the table, then bringing his hands up to his chin. "I will kill you all with my sword. Sally can then revive you quickly behind the commotion with the help of my lady for they both are the best healer's I know." Treize said and Rashid instantly objected.

"NO! This I forbid." Rashid said and Quatre sighed.

"No Rashid, Treize is right. However, the rules of the trial are; if one fails, we all fail. You only have to kill one of us

Treize. You will kill me.” Quatre said and this time it was Trowa who jerked in his seat.

“I agree with Rashid. Not you, I’ll take the blow. He can kill me.” Trowa said and Quatre shook his head.

“It’s my obligation, this is my homeland, my people’s heritage, and I should be the one to bear the weight of this.” Quatre began and Trowa glared.

“No Quatre, You’re the most important one here, we can’t afford the risk.” Trowa countered his voice raised.

“Whoa! Lover’s spat!” Duo piped up from the couch. “Chill both of you already. We ain’t gonna know who’s turn it is, until Rashid pulls out that slip of paper. We don’t even know if we can work in this little swordfight around her dirty little deed. So why don’t we save the ‘who gets to feel like a shish-ka-bob contest’ until after that. Whaddyasay kiddies?” Duo asked and Both Quatre and Trowa’s mouths snapped shut.

“Alright, who are you and where’s Duo? Nothing that wise ever comes out of the mouth of the Duo I know.” Wufei interjected and Duo merely flipped him off.

“Get bent, you just can’t handle it when I’m right can you?” Duo smirked and Heero sighed, glad for once he had absolutely nothing to say. They had all been right at one point or another throughout the whole conversation. He was just along for the ride at this point of the game.

“Cathy do you know what she has planned?” Treize asked and Catherine shook her head.

“Sadly no. If wish I could’ve been of more help really.” She said and looked up tears in her lavender-gray eyes. “But I lost you once Trowa. I don’t want to see it happen again.” She said and everyone’s eyebrows rose in query.

“Excuse me? What are you talking about?” Trowa asked just as confused as the rest.

“Here, this will explain it, just stay alive little brother.” Catherine said bolting to her feet, shoving the hologram into Trowa’s hand and feeling the meeting. It was getting late in the evening, and she had to get back. Not to mention she did not want to know who planned on being a martyr it was bad enough they were taking this chance at all. It was too much for her to handle, and before she broke down she fled.

Trowa stared at the disk in his hand and flipped the button. "By the Maker! It can't be." He gasped and he bolted to the door. "Cathy! Cathy wait!" he cried but only the silence of the courtyard greeted him. Quatre was at his elbow in a flash.

"Trowa what is it?" Quatre asked his voice filled with concern.

"I never thought... it's been so long I'd all but forgotten she even existed at all. But she's alive, and here after all this time." Trowa said, the tears running down his cheeks. "I'd forgotten what she looked like, I was so young." He continued as he watched the hologram play in his hands. "I remember this day. It's the only thing about her I do remember." He was talking more for himself at this point as Quatre listened on to his litany.

"Cathy, I remember you. We'll be together again." He said and Quatre's heart clutched for a brief moment. Before Trowa added the most crucial bit of information. "We'll be a family again my sister."

"Your sister?" Quatre asked trying not to make it sound like relief.

Trowa nodded and pulled Quatre into his arms. "Look." Trowa said as he played the hologram once more. Quatre giggled.

"That's you! Oh my God, you were so cute." He said and Trowa chuckled.

"I'm not cute." Trowa said sternly. And Quatre smiled.

"Yes you were. You are now." Quatre said wrapping his arms around his lover's waist.

"I am not cute." Trowa said mustering up his manly pride, Quatre only laughed.

"Okay, okay, handsome then, is that better?" Quatre pacified and Trowa smiled.

"Better, You're the cute one." Trowa said and Quatre smiled gaily.



“One’s mind is never fully used to it’s potential. Or is it? What happens to the mind when it is challenged to what is normally perceived as it’s limits. Only one with Mag’ua’nac blood in his veins can sup from the planet known only by the name Zero. To those without this protection, the tea brewed from it’s leaves is a deadly poison. But to those who can endure it’s potency, it can alter ones consciousness to a higher plain, it gives the gift of sight beyond sight. It will show you your true enemies and grant you a clear knowledge of the truth. I charge the only one among you with Mag’ua’nac blood to drink, and see your enemies. Drink and then fight as your mind with a new grasp on reality tells you to.” Rashid said and nearly collapsed where he stood.

No one willingly drank of the Zero elixir, yes it gave one an inner sight into a battle, but it had serious side effects. It bolstered rage, and boiled a man’s blood. It carried some to the brink of madness. Quatre was only half Mag’ua’nac there was no telling what this would do to him. It could kill him out right, or worse. Rashid prayed Quatre refused.

Trowa’s grip on Quatre hand was crushing. “DON’T YOU BLOODY DARE QUATRE!” Trowa’s anger resounded in Quatre’s mind.

“Forgive me Trowa, I have to.” Quatre countered and Trowa glared at him, unlike he had ever done before. He was furious.

“You don’t have to do anything. This is too much, it could kill you!” Trowa said, out loud this time and Quatre lowered his gaze and pulled his hand free from Trowa’s grip.

“Yes, I know. However, it is apparently my turn to risk my life. I love you, and I’m sorry, but I have to do this.” Quatre said tears in his eyes. He turned to Rashid.

“Quatre don’t do it please.” Trowa’s voice was pleading now, and Quatre almost turned back at the sound of anguish contained in his tone. But instead of turning back, Quatre bolstered all of his courage and will power and stepped forward. Trowa made a strangled noise in the back of his throat.

“I accept the Trial.”

Trowa fell to his knees behind his lover and in the cloudless desert sky thunder rolled and sang of bitter regret and sorrow as Trowa watched his lover sign his own death sentence.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Fifteen

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Trowa’s hands fisted in the dirt floor of the arena, he felt betrayed. Not by Quatre, but by the Maker himself. All his life spent reaching for something he could hold onto, to love, and just when he’d gotten near enough to touch, it was ripped away. It hurt the first time; it was sheer agony to have to endure it a second time. He tried to tell himself Quatre was strong, Quatre was right it must be done. But he couldn’t help the fear that stabbed his heart with a thousand swords. It felt horribly wrong. This was not merely a gamble, this was risking more than life, but sanity. He felt a hand upon his shoulder and looked up into the worried violet eyes of Duo.

“Hang in there Trowa. We gotta have faith in him now, I have a feeling blondie there is a lot tougher than we’re giving him credit for.” Duo said giving Trowa’s shoulder a gentle squeeze. His concern written plainly across his face and Trowa could only nod dumbly, his whole body was numb and his limbs trembled.

Trowa lifted his face to watch his graceful love walk proudly across the arena to stand before Rashid. Several Mag’ua’nac women dressed in black with veil’s hiding their faces came out bearing a silver chalice. They handed the goblet to Quatre and Trowa’s throat became as parched as the desert surrounding him. He couldn’t watch, but he couldn’t tear his eyes away either. He had to drink in every moment, imprint Quatre’s beautiful image into his memory for eternity. He fought the urge to leap to his feet and knock that infernal cup from Quatre’s gentle hands. It seemed he wasn’t the only one to think that either, as Duo’s hand clenched unconsciously upon Trowa’s shoulder.

“You can do it Quatre man. Don’t let the bitch win.” Duo hissed under his breath as they watched unblinking as Quatre raised the cup to his lips and drink. Tears poured down Trowa’s checks as he watched his beloved’s eyes close and sup the liquid death he held to his lips. He prayed with every fiber of his being he’d see those eyes open again.

Quatre drank his fill, he then regally handed the cup back to the black clad women. They took the cup away leaving Quatre to stand before the crowd, waiting for the drink to take effect. He turned his gaze back to Trowa, and softly smiled, letting a look of the purest love wash over Trowa who desperately sought to cling to that one look for all eternity. “Don’t ever forget I love you.” Came Quatre’s voice into Trowa’s mind. Trowa openly wept.

“As I love you, don’t leave me.” Trowa replied with his heart and mind. Quatre’s smile answered him.

“My soul is in your hands, it is impossible for me to leave you.” Quatre said with a whispers breath on Trowa’s senses just before his eyes rolled back into his head and he began to convulse.

“Nooooo!” Trowa cried and scrambled to his feet over to where Quatre lay twitching. He pulled Quatre into his arms and held fast as his love’s body violently heaved and became spasmodic. Rashid moved to help and Trowa’s face hardened into rage and the skies flashed in warning. Rashid backed away his head hung low.

“It is only the awakening. His body has accepted the drink lord Trowa.” Rashid said humbly. “Be prepared, we know not how the visions will affect him. It may have been better if it had killed him outright.” Rashid warned as they waited.

That was all the warning Trowa had, the next moment his world was thrown from his grasp. He watched Quatre’s eyes open, but the eyes were not his beloved’s soft caring windows, but a light of a twisted and menacing hue reflected back, and then a blast of power sent Trowa literally flying across the arena. His head landing with a sickening thud against the far wall. His last thought was a prayer to the maker to restore his beloved Quatre before it was too late. Then darkness descended and the skies cleared as Trowa lay in an unmoving heap, blood pooling around him quickly.

Much too quickly and Sally catapulted herself over the low wall racing to his side. Heero was there almost as quickly as he picked up Trowa and carried him out of the arena so Sally could work on him unhindered. Wufei was instantly at her side offering his strength. Heero’s eyes darkened and he turned to face Quatre who stood humming with power and an eerie glow in his aquamarine eyes.

“QUATRE! Snap out of it! We’re not your enemies!” Heero shouted facing off against the blonde man who seemed oblivious to everything around him. “That was Trowa! Your Trowa! Quatre wake up!” Heero shouted and Quatre’s face turned to look right through Heero.

Quatre merely blinked and Heero was flung across the arena much as Trowa by a burst of power that robbed Heero of breath. Only by crumpling into a ball and rolling was Heero spared the same injuries before he too went smashing into the wall.

Duo’s eyes flared to life and he stood glowing, his hair flapping around him like a cape as it was stirred to life by the power flowing into him. “Quatre! What are you seeing man? This is us you idiot! We’re not your enemies! You’d better hope that drug wears off quick. Don’t make me kill you.” Duo warned and slowly Quatre turned to face him.

“Duo, don’t! Get out of the way! He’s MAD! He’s too human, the drug has warped his mind!” Rashid warned as another energy blast erupted and Duo went flying back, Heero diving to catch his lover before he met with the wall. From her seat Dorothy smiled.

“And so you fail. Your lover dead by your own hands, the others shall be dead come first light because of your failure. Humans, far too easy to defeat.” Dorothy said as she stood and turned to leave. “We leave this moon, I am sick of the heat here. Gather my things.” Dorothy ordered and Catherine stood frozen in her tracks.

“How could you? This is horrible, what have you done?” Catherine choked and Dorothy turned to glare at her.

“What have I done? Thrown away irksome human waste. Minds so weak have no business nor right to be allowed to run amuck and mess with the order of the senate.” Dorothy said and Catherine shook with anger.

“Then kill them, don’t make them suffer like this. This is inhuman!” Catherine wailed and Dorothy chuckled.

“Precisely. If it were humane, I’d be ashamed, I’m far from human and glad of it, such pitiful creatures you are.” Dorothy said patronizingly and Catherine growled.

“Bitch, kill me for I’m going nowhere with you.” Catherine said and Dorothy laughed.

“Oh do I sense defiance? Silly girl, do as your told.” Dorothy said and Zechs and Noin stepped up behind her.

“Do as she’s told? Do not the records of entry indicate this human is NOT a slave but your traveling companion?” Noin said and Dorothy whipped around. “Well?” Noin asked and not wanting to blow her cover Dorothy simply nodded.

“Is this woman being a nuisance to you Miss? Would you care to bring it before council?” Zechs asked and Catherine’s eyes danced but placed along with their game.

“No, she can go. I just don’t like being ordered around.” Catherine said and Dorothy fairly bristled.

“Then I suggest you get on your way.” Zechs said giving Catherine her chance to escape. He then turned to Dorothy. “Shall I escort you back to your home?” He asked taking Dorothy’s arm. This was his chance, let her make her report to her grandfather, while he waited outside and made sure she got the hell off the moon. As much as he wanted to run her through with his blade, he couldn’t, not yet. Dorothy huffed, spun on her heels and stalked off without a word. Zechs smirked, and then discreetly followed her to make sure no more interference came from her.

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Quatre was in a haze; everywhere he turned Oz'rialite soldiers stood with whips. All of them standing there, mocking him, and daring him to fight. "Leave me alone!" Quatre cried out blasting at everyone in defense as the whips stung his skin.

"What the Hell is Quatre talking about?" Duo asked as he dodged yet another blast of energy from Quatre's seemingly endless supply of it.

"He's not seeing us, but something else." Heero said winded as he jumped out of the way of another strike, dragging Duo along with him. "Look at his face, he's not mad, he's terrified. My guess, he thinks we're after him; this is self-defense. He's not attacking us." Heero said as they once again dashed for cover.

Everyone else had long fled the arena. Only Treize, Rashid, Wufei who had returned from Trowa's side, Duo and Heero remained. Sally and Une were working on Trowa's injuries. Those left in the arena were target practice, waiting for the zero effects to wear off so they could get Quatre back and end this nightmare. "So much for staging a failure, it wasn't needed after all. Quatre is failing miserably on his own." Duo remarked and Rashid snorted.

"Nay, this is far from failure. He's not fighting; he's protecting himself that's the difference. He's not succumbed to the blood lust, and even the warped images that his human blood creates can't make him fight. He's succeed, let's just hope we all live to tell him that later." Rashid said as they all scrambled to their feet as their hiding place erupted from a blast around them.

"He's got fucking good aim for a nutcase!" Duo hissed as he went tumbling ass over feet into the council table.

For hours this continued as they distracted Quatre waiting for him to wake up from his drugged state. Then suddenly, without warning, Quatre just melted to the ground.

"He's spent, he has no more energy to throw at us." Treize said wiping his brow as they all knelt at Quatre's side. Heero reached over and picked him up.

"Good, let him sleep it off." Heero said as he carried Quatre back to his bed.

They met a teary eyed Sally in the hall after they laid Quatre to rest. "Sally? Sally what's wrong?" Wufei asked as he welcomed her into his embrace.

"It's Trowa." She said threw sniffles.

"What's wrong with Trowa?" Duo asked not sure if he wanted to hear his quiet moody friend was dead.

"He's alive, but, oh God, he doesn't remember. Not anything, He didn't know who I was when he woke up. He didn't recognize anything. He didn't even remember his own name. That blow to his head as erased his memory, he's got amnesia." Sally said and everyone felt like the room suddenly became suffocated and oppressive.

"Oh god, who's gonna tell Quatre? This will kill him." Duo said as he slowly slid down the wall to sit on the floor. "Yeah, some victory. We won, great. At what cost?" He muttered angrily as he threw a pebble across the room. It skittered across the floor and stopped at the feet of the tall man in the doorway. They all looked up to see Trowa standing there, his eyes filled with confusion. He bent and picked up the pebble and just looked at it before looking up to the people staring at him.

All these strange faces, just staring at him with pity. He'd heard what the longhaired one had said. "Who's Quatre?" Trowa asked and hearts fell across the board. How were they going to handle this? How would they get Trowa's memory back, but more importantly, how were they going to tell Quatre what he had done to the one person that meant the most to him in the whole universe. How would they tell him that the man he loved didn't know who he was anymore?

Too many questions to be asked and no answers could be found to give. Tonight's victory had been exacted at the heaviest of prices.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Sixteen

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Three days Quatre slept, fitfully tossing and turning as the zero effects warped his dreams. Sally sat by his side running cool cloths over his fevered brow. They had moved everyone’s quarters once Zechs had reported Dorothy’s departure from the moon, to the palace proper. Quatre now lay in cushioned pillows made of the finest silk and the softest down feathers, but still it afforded him little comfort from his ordeal, and the worst was yet to come. The soft pastel hues of blue, green, and rose that made up Quatre’s bed coverings suited the beautiful young prince perfectly, yet everyone found it lacking as they waited in fearful anticipation of Quatre’s awakening.

Trowa was spending his time with Catherine, who had swiftly taken it upon herself to care for her brother. She refused to let anyone near him saying flat out he’d been through enough and needed time to adjust. He had seemed eager enough to accept the fact Catherine was his sister and was listening to her tales of his youth. But whenever someone mentioned Quatre’s name she would usher Trowa away in a hurry without explanation as to her reasoning behind sheltering him from a large part of his past, and what the old Trowa had looked upon as his future.

“I don’t understand her. It’s as if she doesn’t want Trowa to know about Quatre.” Duo said as he sat with Heero and Wufei in the cool of the palace gathering hall. Clad in the loose muslin garments the natives wore, they ate a simple fare of fruit for breakfast as they killed time waiting.

“In this, I agree with you.” Wufei said as he picked a few grapes from his plate and rolled them around in his fingers, his appetite wan in light of circumstances. “I cannot seem to fathom where her animosity towards Quatre comes from. It was an accident what happened. Quatre would never have intentionally hurt Trowa.” Wufei sighed forgoing food and sipping at his juice instead.

Heero as per his usual manner sat silent for a while contemplating the situation before venturing his opinion. “Whatever her reasoning, I’m sure she’s doing what she feels is best for Trowa in her opinion. However, eventually she’s going to have to face the fact that regardless of what happened, Quatre is a part of Trowa’s life, whether she likes it or not. He may not remember Quatre now, but who’s to say he won’t one day. Not to mention she’s going to find it difficult to keep Quatre away from Trowa once he wakes up.” Heero said looking out into the gardens from his seat by the window.

“That’s true. I don’t think any of us will be able to keep Quatre away from Trowa. I just hope Quatre doesn’t freak out.

He already wants to apologize for everyone's mistakes as it is, if he could he'd find a way to blame himself for the fact there is no air in the vacuum of space. This is going to really give Quatre one massive guilt trip from hell." Duo said running frustrated fingers through the hair by his temples. "Oh man, I'm getting a headache thinking about all this. " He whined flopping his face down upon the tabletop.

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Quatre awoke and ran a hand over the empty side of his bed. The feel of silk an unexpected sensation, the empty section of the bed even more a surprise. He sat up wide-awake, the sun spilling in through his window illuminating the room. No wonder Trowa wasn't in bed, it was the middle of the afternoon. "So you are at last awake your highness. How do you feel?" Rashid asked coming into the room bearing a tray of succulent melon slices and juice.

"I have a headache, but other than that I'm alright I guess. What happened?" Quatre asked as Rashid set the tray beside the bed. His eyes were dark, and the bags under his eyes proved he'd been awake for a long time. "Rashid? Are you alright?" Quatre asked worried and the large Mag'ua'nac sighed.

"I am fine Highness. Just worried about you is all. Here eat well, then we'll talk." Rashid said and Quatre's guard instantly went up.

"Why? What's wrong? What happened?" Quatre asked struggling to crawl out of bed. A large hand grabbed his shoulder and gently urged him back into bed.

"I'll tell you, just sit and eat first. You need your strength, you've been asleep for three full days." Rashid said and Quatre's eyes went wide.

"Three days? My goodness, what happened? I really don't remember anything. Apart from drinking then waking up here." Quatre said taking the bowl of melon from the tray slipping a bite size morsel into his mouth as Rashid sat beside the bed and ran a hand through dark hair.

"Obviously your body accepted the zero elixir, however your human blood warped the visions you saw. You lashed out in defense. We can only surmise that the visions you had were perhaps dreams or possibly things you have experienced in the past that were locked in your sub-consciousness. We think the elixir brought those events to the forefront, making you relieve a nightmare. You didn't resort to fighting, as that is what the elixir normally brings out in a person. What is was designed for in our darker past. But instead of awakening your rage you were protecting yourself from something we could not see." Rashid made sure to begin to tell Quatre what they perceived as happening, hoping to soften the blow and ease the young mans pending guilt. Quatre nodded as he swallowed.

"Okay, what did I do?" He asked getting to the point. Rashid sighed, Quatre knew he was evading that issue and the

point had come where he had to tell Quatre the whole truth. He may have appeared as being a pure innocent, but Quatre was far from Naive.

“There is little left of the arena. Your defenses are quite effective. We had to wait until you had used up all your stores and collapsed from exhaustion before we could step near you.” Rashid said and Quatre cast his eyes downward.

“I’m sorry.” He said softly and Rashid’s heart clenched.

“Do not be sorry, you were not yourself your highness.” Rashid countered and laid a hand on Quatre’s arm.

“Did anyone get hurt?” Quatre asked and Rashid wanted to weep.

“Yes, highness. I’m sorry to say Lord Trowa suffered some injuries. He was at very close range when the elixir took hold of you. You lashed out without warning, through no fault of your own.” Rashid said and the bowl slipped from Quatre’s hand and went crashing to the floor.

“Where is he? Oh God please tell me I didn’t...” Quatre sobbed struggling once again to get out of bed. Rashid physically reached out to restrain him.

“He lives. Please Highness calm yourself. There is more you must know.” Rashid begged tears on his cheeks. Nothing he had ever done hurt as much as having to tell Quatre the painful truth. Quatre looked devastated, it would only get worse.

“What? Tell me!” Quatre begged his voice quivering in fear.

“The head injury he received I’m afraid has given him a case of amnesia. He does not remember anything about his past. We are all strangers to him and he is currently under his sister’s care. Highness, I’m sorry, but he does not remember what happened, nor does he recall why he is here.” Rashid said and the cry that issued forth out of Quatre’s throat was a pinning keel that was the most mournful thing Rashid had ever heard. He watched Quatre shut his eyes, knowing his Prince was reaching out to Trowa.

“Trowa? Trowa?” Quatre voiced his call and in a litany of unanswered whispers Quatre called a mantra consisting of naught but his lover’s name. Over and over Quatre called Trowa’s name, as tears soaked his pillows. Quatre collapsed in a ball, curled up in upon himself as he rocked to and fro. Desperately seeking that link he shared with his lover. It was gone, only a void answered him.

“TROWA!!!!!!!” Quatre shrieked in desperation, his cry echoing down the passageways of the palace. Reverberating and shaking the very foundations with the force of the sorrow contained within the wail. From the gathering hall three men stood abruptly and wordlessly went racing to Quatre’s side. All three faces wet with tears as they ran. The heartbreak in that cry was enough to turn even the coldest of souls to weeping mass over the loss.

What they found in Quatre’s room was worse than they’d anticipated. Quatre was curled up in the corner of the room, pounding his fists into the wall as he sobbed uncontrollably. Duo knelt by his side and reached out to comfort his friend.

“Quatre, it’s not your fault. It was an accident.” He said softly and Quatre only scrambled away from Duo’s offered embrace.

“No! It is my fault, what have I done?” Quatre sobbed escaping the arms that sought to give him surcease to his lament. “I don’t deserve your comfort, I deserve to be flogged for this.” Quatre cried turning towards Rashid. “What is the punishment you give for a crime like this?” Quatre demanded through his grief.

“Highness, there was no crime. Please.” Rashid said falling to his knees. The look in Quatre’s eyes was enough to render a man in two, his pain and torment in his soul as punishment enough.

Wufei raised his hands and made a soft incantation as he fought breaking down into a weeping mass on the floor. “Heero, catch him.” Wufei muttered and Heero moved, just as Quatre began to sink to the floor. “He’s too distraught for coherent behavior. Let him sleep on it for a little.” Wufei said as Heero laid the quivering, unconscious Quatre in bed.

“By the maker. I knew he’d be upset, but I never expected him to be like this. What the hell did he want us to do to him? Hang him upside down by his toenails or something? Fuck me, it was an accident Quatre.” Duo said crying as he pulled the covers up over his trembling friend. Shaking himself Duo turned and kicked a chair over. “Damn it! How much more huh? How much more is the maker going to dump on these two? How much longer do I have to sit here helpless and watch them suffer?” Duo asked the heavens bitterly. Heero came over and slipped an arm around Duo.

“I know it’s hard to watch Duo, but we have to be strong for them. It’s all we can do for now. There’s still a long road ahead of us, and we can’t move forward until this sorts itself out. We have to get Trowa in here, we have to bring them back together somehow.” Heero said just as Cathy appeared in the doorway.

“So is he happy with what he’s done?” She asked coldly and Duo verily fumed.

“WHAT! How can you say that? Tell me you didn’t hear that cry for yourself? He’s torn apart, he never meant for that to

happen. Trowa means everything to him!" Duo shouted in anger and Catherine folded her arms across her chest.

"But he still did it, and now Trowa's torn apart because of him. Let him suffer, he deserves it for what he's done." Catherine said just as vehemently.

"Bitch! How can you say that? You don't know what these two mean to each other. You came in after the fact! We were there to see it for ourselves. They feed off one another if you take away one you take the soul away from the other. Don't do this to them, don't stand between them." Duo pleaded, but it fell on deaf ears.

"I love my brother, I will not see him hurt again. Just keep that..." She said pointing a Quatre. "...away from my little brother. He's happy now and I'm going to keep him that way. Good riddance to all those painful memories he has, all the hell he went through. He's got a future now free from all that horror, I don't want him to remember, it's bad enough he went through it at all. At least he was able to forget the nightmare; it will never plague him again. He can find someone else to make him happy, he doesn't need that thing there. He's forgotten he even has powers; he can live like a normal man now. Having that around might only re-awaken his talent. Just leave my brother alone." Catherine said turning on her heels and storming away. Heero had to physically restrain Duo from chasing after her.

"Oi! Get back here wench! Heero let me go! I'll strangle the bitch! Quatre is not the monster she's making him out to be!" Duo struggled in vain against his lover's grip.

"We know that Duo. She's upset; she'll realize that sooner or later. It's not like they can go anywhere. Treize isn't stupid enough to let her waltz out of here with Trowa. Like it or not, we need Trowa, and we need his gifts. Forgotten they may be, but they won't stay dormant. Power never does, it will find a release eventually. Trowa will need us then for protection, so will Catherine. She'll see the truth. She's hurting too, we all are. We have to give these wounds time to heal for all of us." Heero said and Duo ceased his struggling.

"I still wanna punch her lights out." Duo grumbled righting the chair he'd knocked over and flopped into it defeated.

"Again, I agree with you. Stupid Onna, she'll mother hen him to death. He'll seek his freedom from her on his own I'd wager." Wufei said sitting down across from Duo. Heero nodded.

"That's my guess too. You can forget events in your past, but it's unlikely the personality has changed. Trowa's like a panther, he's solitary by nature. He'll seek his freedom from her soon enough. And like Duo said, he'll seek his soul. He'll find it there waiting for him." Heero said gesturing to the golden figure curled up asleep and shivering upon the bed.

"It's up to us to make sure the path is clear then huh." Duo said and Heero nodded. "Great, running interference between an over protective psychotic sister, and a stressed out, undersexed, lover boy. Somehow I missed that in our

job description.” Duo bemoaned and Wufei kicked him under the table.

“It’s not in there idiot. That’s what friends do for each other.” Wufei hissed and Duo smirked.

“Well duh! Man Wufei, do you ever get the concept of sarcasm? I’m wasting my breath on you.” Duo sighed and Wufei snorted.

“You waste air constantly, I’ve ceased to differentiate is all.” Wufei countered and Heero smacked them both upside the head.

“Will you two cut it out already? You’ve started to give me a headache now.” Heero said flopping into a chair between them.

“Sorry Heero, Sheesh.” Duo said rubbing the back of his head.

“You can make it up to me later.” Heero said a tiny smile tugging at his lips. Wufei groaned.

“That’s it, I’m going to go take a nap. I do not need to be witness to your mating rituals.” Wufei said grabbing his staff and high tailing it out of the room.

“Ten to one, he’s not going to bed to take a nap.” Duo muttered with a smirk plastered on his face. Heero laughed.

“Where’s Sally?” Heero asked and Duo chuckled.

“Does it matter? I’m sure we know where she’s going to end up.” Duo added as they settled down to keep vigil over their friend. Finding solace in each other’s embrace thankful that through all the torment, they still had each other.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Seventeen

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Trowa sat brooding, he appreciated Catherine’s efforts, but he was a grown man and her codling of him was getting annoying, rapidly. He needed out of this room, he felt like a prisoner, and for some reason that feeling made him more than just a tad edgy. Had he been a prisoner in the past? He didn’t know, all he did know, was he needed air. That Sally woman had healed his injuries, he was perfectly healthy, there was no valid reason for Cathy to want to keep him like a caged animal. He paced his room like a lion stealing furtive glances out the window every time he passed. Outside, he needed to be outside, soon.

He looked down into the courtyard and saw the ones he had learned were called Duo and Heero walk outside. Between them was a stranger, one more beautiful than words could describe. But so forlorn looking, it broke his heart. Something that beautiful should never look so devastated. The longer Trowa stared; this strange sensation began to rise up from within. Cold, frigid cold gripped him and Trowa fell to his knees shivering and gripping his head. “I know him, how do I know him?” Trowa said shaking off the void, grasping for fragments of memory that stayed elusively beyond his reach.

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“Guys, I really...” Quatre began to protest as Duo and Heero led him outside.

“Don’t argue Quatre, you’ve been in that bed for the past five days. Three of them valid days, the past two understandable, however, you need fresh air, you need sun, and you need to be with people who care about you. We know you’re upset, but we’re not going to let you wallow in guilt when you did nothing wrong. Now shut up and do as your told.” Duo scolded as if he were Quatre’s mother or keeper and not just his concerned friend.

Quatre opened his mouth to protest once more, then shut it again without a word as Heero glared at him as only Heero could. With a sigh, he gave in and allowed Heero and Duo to lead him wherever it was they were taking him.

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From his bird's eye view Trowa watched the trio get closer, then his eyes narrowed as he watched his sister's actions. She went racing across to intercept them and Trowa strained his ears to listen. "I told you to keep THAT away from Trowa." Catherine said standing in front of the entryway that led to their apartment from the courtyard. Her arms spread wide as if to be physical barrier to their passage. The blonde one seemed to wilt where he stood, and Trowa's heart ached in his chest. What was the cause of that pain? Did it have something to do with him? From Cathy's reaction, Trowa could only guess it did. Did she not see the pain she was causing in that beautiful creature? Whatever he had done surely did not warrant that sort of punishment.

"Look Cathy, last I checked, this Palace belonged to Quatre. I think he can go where he damn well pleases. For Fuck's sake drop the attitude, he's going for a walk hag." Duo shouted back and Trowa watched as the blonde man tore himself away from his two protectors, and a voice like the heavens themselves were weeping spoke pleadingly.

"Please stop, all of you! I'm sorry, I cannot be sorry enough for what I've done. I don't expect your forgiveness for something I can never forgive myself for. I won't ask to see him. I won't even ask that should he ever remember what happened to tell him I love him. I ask for no favors, for I do not deserve them. Now please stop this, let it be. I will stay away, there's been enough damage done by my hands already, without all of you ready to tear each other's throats out over this. I'm sorry, more sorry than you'll likely ever know." Quatre said tears streaming down his checks as he fled. Running as fast as his tired feet would take him.

That was all Trowa could take, that feeling in his chest hurt. It was painful beyond measure to watch the retreating form of that blonde apparition run away in such grief. Something inside him was being pulled toward that young man, it was calling to him. Whatever he had done, this torture had to cease. Trowa leapt from his window startling all three people left in the courtyard. Trowa stood tall and his face was shadowed in anger.

"I want answers Catherine. Who was that? And what heinous crime has he committed that just your barring this door could cause him to flee in such a grievous state?" Trowa asked and Catherine folded her arms.

"He's nothing to fret over Trowa. Come on, let's go inside, I'll make some soup." Catherine said changing the subject. Taking Trowa's elbow to try and guide him back inside. Trowa wouldn't budge.

"Bullshit wench. Tell him or I will. He deserves the truth." Duo spat and Catherine glowered.

"It's the past, it's over it's not important." She countered and Trowa fumed.

"How about I decide what is and what is not important. If this has something to do with me then I damn well want to know. Duo who was that?" Trowa said turning to look at the man with the long hair.

“Don’t you dare DUO!” Catherine said on the verge of hysterics and Trowa grumbled but stood firm.

Duo took no notice of Catherine. “THAT was Quatre. It was during his trial you accidentally got hurt. He was suffering from delusions brought about by drugs, and he lashed out in defense. You got caught in the crossfire and smacked your head. But believe me, Quatre would never have hurt you on purpose, he’d rather die than see that happen.” Duo said and Trowa nodded.

“I see, and this is why you refuse to let him in to see me Cathy. It’s seems rather silly. If it was an accident I bear no ill will. He looks on the verge of suicide over a mistake. I’m still breathing am I not? It’s not like he purposefully tried to kill me, everyone, even you have said that it was just an accident at one point or another. I think he’s been punished enough.” Trowa said and Catherine tugged his arm.

“Yes, yes, yes, whatever. Let’s go inside.” She said hastily before Trowa or worse Duo could say more. Trowa pulled his arm free.

“There’s more to this, what?” Trowa asked seeing Catherine’s agitated state.

“Hell yeah there’s more. You really want to know why he’s hurting so much? Go ask him. I’m sure you’ll see it for yourself.” Duo said and Trowa nodded. And turned to follow in the direction the young man had gone.

“Trowa no, you’ll regret it.” Catherine said and Trowa turned to look at her coolly.

“Perhaps, but this is my decision to make, not yours. If this is my past, I want to know.” Trowa said turning and running off after Quatre.

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It took little time for Trowa to track down the golden stranger named Quatre. For some strange reason, his first instinct had been to search in the palace gardens. There, illuminated by a swatch of sunshine as it broke through a gap in the hanging canopy of wisteria, sat a figure which in that filtered glow of sunlight appeared to be an angelic vision of a man too heavenly to be real.

His head was bent low, his chin nearly resting upon his chest and his thick mane of blonde tendrils shadowed his face. The tears had stopped, but the pain went far too deep, and his body language spoke of utter despair and dejection. Trowa’s heart clenched and this young man’s pain suddenly became his own. He stood there, rooted to the spot,

unable to breathe as he just watched the one named Quatre. Something about the young man seated in the garden called to that inner voice, the lost understanding. Trowa felt inexplicably drawn toward the light that was Quatre, as a moth was to flame.

He was under this young man's bewitching spell as his feet moved of their own accord and drew him ever nearer. A twig underfoot snapped and the young man's melancholy face shot up and locked Trowa's gaze with eyes the color of the sea after a storm. Eyes that sang of ancient wisdom and youthful passion, such eyes should never be touched by the sorrow that swam in them now. Those eyes widened into disbelief before a trembling voice stumbled to speak. "T-T-Trowa?"

A half smile forced its way upon Trowa's lips as he knelt to be eye level with the young man perched upon the low stone bench. The young man looked either ready to bolt like a shy deer, or about ready to throw himself into Trowa's arms. Trowa could see the inner struggle as plain as day upon Quatre's face. "It's all right. I've been told, and I know it was an accident. You shouldn't beat yourself up so over this. I'm not angry with you." Trowa said reaching up to tuck an errant lock of hair behind Quatre's ear, then instantly wondered why in the world he'd done that in the first place. It was an awfully familiar gesture with someone who was still as yet a stranger. However, it had felt so right, so quintessential in comfort, as if it were the most natural thing in the world for him to do.

Fresh tears hovered in the eyes of the blonde who looked so desperately at him. "Trowa, oh Trowa you should be mad. I nearly killed you, and I took away everything that you were. You couldn't possibly hate me more than I hate myself." Quatre said, a few tears slipping down his cheeks. Trowa again before his brain could even register his actions his hand was wiping away those tears with a gentle touch.

"I think it is against nature to find anything hateful about you. You punish yourself far more than you should. Accidents, no matter how tragic, are just that, accidents. Whatever happened, whatever events lead up to it, I can tell at least so much you didn't mean for it to happen and if you could you'd turn back the very clock to prevent it from happening. So please, for my sake if not your own, forgive yourself and shed this overwhelming guilt for matters that were beyond your control." Trowa comforted and gently reached out to Quatre. That was all it took, and Quatre threw his arms around Trowa's neck and wept.

His whole body shook with the force of his sobs. Trowa gently stroked Quatre's hair in a soothing manner as the last vestiges of his torment released themselves in the relief of Trowa's embrace. "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry." Quatre cried over and over into Trowa's shoulder.

"I know, enough now. What's done is done." Trowa said leaning back and dragging his sleeve over Quatre's cheeks with a soft smile for the emotionally fragile young man who had suffered more than Trowa had from this accident. "Better now?" Trowa asked and received a tiny smile in return.

"Good. Now please, may I ask you something?" Trowa asked and Quatre nodded once a look of hope on his face.

"Anything, ask me anything." Quatre said and Trowa lost himself for a moment in the sparkle that had appeared in

Quatre's eyes.

He recovered from that look and took a deep breath. "Can you tell me why you were so upset over this? Catherine refuses to mention your name, and the rare moments I get to speak to others, they seem reluctant to tell me. What is so important that it seems I can only get the answer direct from you?" Trowa asked and that haunted look returned to Quatre's eyes.

"If I told you, it may do more harm than good. I fear this is only a question you can answer yourself. It's something you must feel to know, remember to understand. But I will help you look for it, and in the search itself you may discover the answer." Quatre said then added. "No matter how much I long to tell you what I know, please don't ask again."

Trowa nodded, he wasn't happy, but it was something beyond what he'd had before. "Where do you suggest I begin to search for this reasoning?" Trowa asked and Quatre looked up, cocking his head slightly in one of the most adorable gestures Trowa had ever seen.

"Like I said Trowa. The answers are inside you, you know, deep down you know. You just must learn to feel it again." Quatre said reaching up as he gently brushed the hair away from Trowa's face leaning in close to where their noses almost touched and their eyes were reflected back in each other's. "And I pray with my whole being you feel it once more." Quatre said barely above a whisper. Trowa felt a trembling sensation once more, as he was pulled into eyes that looked at him with such unwavering affection.

Trowa's hands twitched at his sides, wanting to pull this creature into an embrace and never let go. Kiss this creature until he was gasping for breath, this man wasn't human, nothing this transcending to encounter could be anything other than pure life energy. Trowa felt alive and intoxicated just being in his presence.

He felt a surge of inner power rise from the pit of his stomach and then fill his center with an overflowing freedom. Like a raging river against the fragile shallow banks, the storm grew, and the power rose with steady force spilling over and cascading over its barriers with abandon. The garden around them stirred to life and Quatre's hair began to flutter about as the small vortex within the confines of the garden began to blow. The laughter that emanated from Quatre was like the tinkling of bells and its joyful cadence melded with the music of the wind. "That's part of it Trowa. You feel your center, your calling. You've taken the first step. Remember who you are, and what you were born to be." Quatre said laying a palm against Trowa's cheek tenderly before turning to go inside. "Feel and Remember." He said with one last look before he floated away as if carried away by the breeze that had come from Trowa's inner strength and will alone.

"I can call the wind, I have the power over the storms. But you, what is this I feel for you?" Trowa asked the empty doorway as he stood in the afterglow of Quatre's presence. "I will remember; I have to. I have to know if what I'm feeling for you now was what I felt for you before. I understand Quatre, and for you I will remember." Trowa said as he turned to head back to his apartments. His mind running a myriad of courses, and all lines lead back to a man named Quatre. Somehow Trowa knew, all roads for him ended and began with Quatre. It was just finding the path amidst the tangled twists and turns in his muddled mind.

But he had a mission to remember, and he would not fail. Trowa had a feeling the prize to be won at the end of his journey was worth anything to gain, and worth dying for to keep. Only time and diligence would reveal the truth, and the truth was out there waiting to be found.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Eighteen

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Trowa returned to his quarters, to find Catherine standing there with her arms folded over her chest. “Well? What did IT have to say?” Catherine demanded and Trowa glared.

“IT has a name.” Trowa said simply as he poured some of the hot, dark and thick beverage the Mag’ua’nacs drank into a ceramic mug. A strong potent concoction made from dark brown beans. Dried then ground into a fine powder before boiling water was poured over it and steeped, but unlike tea, this was far more potent. Trowa had taken a liking to it almost instantly. He had seen a few of the locals pour milk or cream and occasionally sugar into it, he’d tried it, but preferred it unaltered from its purest form. Java they called it, and Trowa could not drink enough of the heady brew. He took a sip and sat down by the window.

“Well?” Catherine demanded when Trowa had been silent for too long in her opinion.

Trowa turned to look at her and sighed. “Where do you harbor this animosity for Quatre? Have you spoken to him at all? I think you misjudge him and treat him too harshly.” Trowa said sipping once again from his mug.

“I don’t take kindly to people who almost kill my brother with unnatural powers. He’s a demon.” Catherine said and Trowa set his mug down and with his elbows resting on his knees, he clasped his hands before him.

“Am I a demon then?” Trowa asked and Catherine laughed.

“Of course not.” She said and Trowa lifted an eyebrow.

“I have powers too so it seems, and I’m sure you knew that before. So tell me again the REAL reason you don’t like

Quatre.” Trowa countered and Catherine looked about to seconds away from a fit of temper.

“HOW DARE HE TELL YOU! You could have been Normal!” Catherine said knocking her chair over as she stood quickly.

“For your information, nobody has told me anything. Not even Quatre. He said I’d have to find my own answers. I found this one quite by accident. I reacted to the power I’ve been feeling inside and it’s a part of who I am. This is Normal, at least for me. I feel like I have a piece of the puzzle back in place. There’s more I must find, and you acting like a shrew is just irritating and not helping me think.” Trowa said and Catherine sputtered.

“Shrew? You’re ungrateful.” Catherine said and Trowa’s expression remained neutral.

“No, I’m not. I am very grateful for your love, and I love you too. However, you are very stubborn when you get a notion in your head as to what’s in my best interests. I am not some child you need coddle Catherine. I may have lost my memory, but I have not forgotten how to wipe my own backside, nor have I forgotten how to make up what’s left of my mind.” Trowa said, his tone cool, but his words biting and true. Catherine just stood there like a statue.

“I need time Catherine, I know you feel like I should let the past lie, that not knowing is better for me. But it’s not. The past is what makes us who we are, and without that knowledge I don’t know who I am. I am seeking my sense of self, why do I feel this way or that way in a certain situation, I need to know why I feel these things or else I will forever be a shadow of who I once was. Try to understand Cathy. Even if the memories locked away are painful, they are still mine and make up who I am. They form the basis for the decisions I make concerning my future.” Trowa said and Catherine flopped into her chair, tears welling in her eyes.

“You have a bright future Trowa, with me. I’ll take care of you.” Catherine said and Trowa reached out and pulled her into his lap and hugged her.

“You will always be a part of my future, but I don’t need you to take care of me. Be my sister, not my mother. You have your own future to think of too. I will always be your brother, nothing will change that.” Trowa said as Catherine cried on his shoulder.

“I don’t want to lose you again.” She sobbed, at last the real reason she wanted to keep him in her sight at all times. Trowa stroked her hair and let her cry in the comfort of his arms.

“You won’t Cathy, I promise I’ll always be here to turn to when you need me, but you must allow me my freedom, else what we have will become a torment and not a blessing.” Trowa reassured and Catherine sniffled once or twice. He sat her up and wiped her eyes. “Besides, you surely will not want me around when you find you want to be a real mother to someone.” Trowa said smiling softly. “I don’t want to be around for that. And woe be to the man who thinks to woo you

too quickly.” He teased and Catherine gasped and slapped his arm.

“TROWA!” She said blushing and Trowa chuckled.

“It’s true, I am suffering memory loss, not blindness. What’s his name? The one sniffing around here morning, noon and night?” Trowa asked and Catherine blushed a deeper hue if possible.

“Abdul.” She said with a slight giggle.

“So, do I need render him unable, or are his affections welcome?” Trowa asked and Catherine laughed.

“Leave it attached please. I may want to use it later.” Catherine said and Trowa did laugh this time.

“I did not need that image thank you, but duly noted. His manhood is safe unless you deem it otherwise.” Trowa said returning his attention to his mug.

“Now who’s being overprotective?” Catherine asked planting her hands on her hips. Trowa smirked over the rim of his cup.

“Just returning the favor sister mine.” He said and Catherine leaned over and kissed his cheek.

“I’m sorry, I did over react a little.” She said, Trowa glared back at her in jest. “Okay, a lot. I just worry about you. I can’t help seeing the little boy and not the man.” Catherine said and Trowa shook his head.

“It’s all right, it’s over now, let’s just move on.” Trowa said effectively ending the argument. Catherine smiled and turned to the small kitchen in their quarters.

She began preparations for dinner and turned to look over her shoulder at her brother who was staring out the window again. “Are you gonna sit there brooding or are you going to do what you’re itching to?” She asked and Trowa turned to look at her in query. “I’m also not blind brother mine. He told you to go off and think, and you’re not thinking about anything but big blue eyes.” Catherine said and Trowa smiled.

“That obvious?” He asked and Catherine laughed.

“To a blind beggar. How about helping me with dinner, then after you eat, skinny, you go enjoy the evening. Before you wind up thinking yourself into a cold shower.” Catherine teased and Trowa glared.

“You’re wicked. You want me out of here so you can enjoy the evening yourself nag.” Trowa said picking up a knife to peel a tuber root.

“That too.” She quipped gaily and Trowa wagged the knife at her.

“By the Maker if you do make an evening of it, leave me some warning so I don’t walk in on something I’d rather not be witness to.” Trowa said and Catherine winked at him.

“If my shawl is outside...” She began and Trowa finished for her.

“I’ll bed myself elsewhere.” He said with a shudder. Not that he disapproved of that Abdul fellow he seemed genuinely infatuated with her. It was just visions of his sister engaging in those kind of activities were not conducive to what he considered pleasant thoughts. However replace Catherine with a certain blonde and well, that cold shower might just be needed after all.

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“Yo Trowa! Over here man!” Duo hailed as Trowa walked out into the courtyard. The stars were just beginning to twinkle in the night sky, and the air had taken on a pleasant crisp quality. It would be cold tonight once the heat that had soaked into the earth evaporated. But it was the desert; extremes in temperature were to be expected. But for now, it was just pleasantly cool as he walked over towards Duo. “Slip your leash again buddy?” Duo teased elbowing Trowa in the ribs.

Impassively Trowa nodded. “It was a misunderstanding. All is well.” Trowa said and Duo smiled.

“Great, I thought so. You talk to Quatre earlier?” Duo asked and Trowa smiled and nodded.

“Annnnd?” Duo asked looking about ready to burst. Trowa shrugged.

“I still have questions. But he was right; I need to find the answers for myself. But I’m weary of thinking right now. I thought I’d take a walk.” Trowa said and Duo chuckled.

“Walk my ass, you were heading back to the palace. Quatre’s not there dude.” Duo said and Trowa stopped where he stood.

“Where is he?” Trowa asked and Duo took his arm.

“He’s out with Wufei. They’ve gone to the Marketplace in the town center. I guess I can tell you this much without fucking you up any. During our trials, there was this bitch troll witch dicking with the Mag’ua’nacs’ minds. The only one she couldn’t mind control was Rashid. Well Quatre figured out why. You see; Big guy is kinda the head honcho here, right under Quatre. He is the Prince and all. Anyway, ya see the head guy always wears this amulet thing, whatever, like a rock necklace. It’s a relic of sorts, and Quatre said his ancestor created it as a protection a long time ago. It’s all mumbo jumbo to me. To make a long story short, it acts like a shield, and I guess they’re pretty darn easy for guys like Wu-man and Quatre to make. They’ve gone into the Market to dig up some things to make enough of these amulet thingies for all the Mag’ua’nacs to wear.” Duo explained and Trowa nodded in understanding and followed Duo out of the Palace gates into the town proper.

“So why are you headed out?” Trowa asked and Duo laughed.

“Fun man, plain and simple these Mag’ua’nacs know how to have a good time. Things don’t come alive here until the sun goes down. I have a date with some good hooch, and I plan on getting shit faced. It’s been a rough week, and I need a day off.” Duo said and looked up at Trowa who seemed, as usual, uninterested.

“Where’s Heero?” Trowa asked finally as they rounded the corner and found the bustling town center already well into doing business.

“He came on ahead with Wufei and Quatre. Somebody had to carry all their crap. He’ll find me after.” Duo said and Trowa turned and a hint of amusement was trapped in his emerald eyes.

“Hence, show up and then carry you back.” Trowa said and Duo laughed brightly.

"Now, he's catching on. Care to share a drink with me buddy?" Duo asked as they paused in front of one of many taverns. Trowa dipped his chin in acceptance and they settled down at one of the outside tables. A scantily clad woman dropped two large wooden mugs filled with a frothy brew in front of them both and Duo pulled out his hip purse and tossed a couple of credit chips on her tray.

"Bottom's up!" Duo said downing his in nearly one swallow.

"You really do plan on being carried back tonight don't you?" Trowa asked after taking a long drink from his own glass.

"Oh hell yeah. I got a purse full of chips, Thank you Quatre, and I plan on making a big dent in it." Duo said reaching to slap the purse on his hip, only to find it missing. He looked up to see a small boy of around seven making off with his money. "Oi! Get back here you little PICK POCKET!" Duo shouted leaping over the table to chase the now fleeing boy. He never noticed Trowa freeze where he sat. He never saw the mug fall from his hand to shatter on the ground at his feet, and he never saw Trowa begin to shake as all his memories came flooding back.

One phrase had triggered a chain reaction that sent Trowa to his knees. "QUATRE!" Trowa cried out, "Oh God, Quatre!" Trowa said hoping his legs could carry him they were shaking so badly. All of it, he remembered everything, no wonder Quatre had looked so dejected. Trowa now knew what Quatre had meant. He had to feel to understand, and feel he did, love brighter than the sun was filling Trowa's breast, spurring his feet to move swiftly through the market stalls in search of his prey.

Trowa's eyes frantically scanned the heads in the crowd, looking for, there... One toe-headed young man stood alone by a jeweler's table. An assortment of Quartz stones laid out for inspection. Trowa wasted not a single second and ran towards his target, eliciting a squeal of shock as he literally grabbed Quatre at a dead run and almost slammed him into the nearby alley wall.

Trowa's mouth moved, but no words issued forth, none could since said mouth was currently crushing Quatre's lips in a powerful kiss. It was only when that infernal need to breathe came did Trowa release Quatre's mouth from his own. Quatre gasped for air and nearly melted into the cobblestones beneath his feet, had Trowa not held him pinned against the wall of the alley.

Eyes filled with confusion and unmitigated hope looked up into Trowa's. And tears formed as Trowa gave Quatre a brilliant smile. "As if I'd not eventually remember my little Pick Pocket?" Trowa asked and Quatre did cry now, but tears of joy as arms suddenly flung themselves around Trowa's neck and hung on for dear life.

"Trowa! Oh Trowa! TROWA!" Quatre was not in his best form where lucidity was concerned, but it was to be expected as Trowa's name fell repeatedly from his lips, falling in between a thousand kisses that rained down upon Trowa's face and hair. Kisses that were returned in earnest by Trowa who held Quatre suspended from the ground in his arms.

“I love you Quatre, I loved you then, and even when I couldn’t remember, I still loved you. I didn’t know why, but I did.” Trowa said through tears of his own.

“I know, and I wanted so much to tell you right then and there why. But I couldn’t, I was afraid if I did; you might not remember the why’s and wherefore’s and never bother trying to remember why you loved me at all. The understanding had to be yours, It’s something as much as I wanted to, I couldn’t give back to you.” Quatre said and Trowa cupped his face and ran fingers through that soft mane of hair.

“I know. And I love you all the more for it. I’m sorry for all you went through. I never ever want to see you look so devastated again. Not ever.” Trowa said bending once more to kiss his beloved.

“I almost lost you by my own hand, I have never been so lost. Oh Trowa forgive me?” Quatre asked around the kisses Trowa was dripping around his cheeks and lips. In response Trowa bit on Quatre’s lip getting a squeak of shock out of his guilt-ridden lover.

“If you don’t stop apologizing for an accident, I am going to make you truly sorry. Knock it off Quatre. Still you obsess! Do I seem angry with you?” Trowa asked pressing his body firmly against Quatre’s, his arousal quite evident as he flattened Quatre against the wall. Quatre shivered, but not from cold.

“No.” Came the almost inaudible answer.

“At last, he too understands. Now we can move forward.” Trowa said before giving once final kiss to the love of his life.

“What’s the fastest way back to the palace?” Trowa asked as stepped back, eyeing his lover suggestively. Quatre fairly pulled him over as he grabbed his hand.

“This way!” Quatre said urgently as they ran back towards the palace and a more private place to hold their reunion.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Nineteen *\*INTERLUDE\**

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

““Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Quatre was laughing merrily as they wove their way through the crowd in the Marketplace. “This is the fastest way back?” Trowa grumbled as they ran into yet another wall of people.

“During daylight hours, yes.” Quatre chuckled as he stopped short to avoid a collision with a clump of women haggling over fabric and Trowa ran into his backside in the process. Quatre turned to look over his shoulder a wicked gleam in his eye. “Are you that impatient?” He teased and Trowa growled and reached a hand around and down to give a teasing squeeze to Quatre’s own excitement.

“Like you’re not?” Trowa fairly purred in Quatre’s ear getting a delightful shiver in response. “If this crowd doesn’t move out of my way, they’re going to get a free show.” He added and Quatre laughed.

“I never took you as an exhibitionist.” Quatre replied as a gap appeared and they pushed their way through.

“Oi! Quatre! Trowa! Over here!” Duo called from where he was seated at yet another tavern and Trowa never bothered turning his head.

“Ignore him maybe he’ll go away.” Trowa hissed and Quatre burst laughing.

“Oh you are horrible. The night is young and so are we.” Quatre said and Trowa frowned.

“And I am young and dying to get you naked.” Trowa countered grabbing Quatre’s hand and taking the lead. Steering them away from Duo.

Too late, Duo suddenly appeared in front of them, a clap of thunder rolled in the distance and Quatre had to stifle another fit of laughter. "Didn't you guys hear me? Thanks for the help buddy, I come back and you've vanished into thin air. Where'd you run off to Trowa?" Duo asked and Trowa sighed, his seduction of Quatre was going to have to wait. He did have at least one thing to say to Duo.

"I have to say thank you Duo. You inadvertently triggered my memory back. But can I thank you later?" Trowa said and Duo's eyes went wide and he howled with laughter.

"Gotcha, Great news. Don't do anything I wouldn't do kiddies." Duo said a huge smile plastered on his face. Quatre was red as a radish, and not due to over exposure to sun. Duo just winked at him then fished around in his pocket as he pulled Trowa aside and pressed whatever was in his hand into Trowa's. "Have a care." Duo said under his breath and Trowa nodded once in gratitude as he turned to take Quatre's hand once more. Duo just laughed happily and returned to his ale.

"What did Duo give you?" Quatre asked trying to see what Trowa held in his hand.

Trowa smirked "Oh, you'll see soon enough." Was all the information Trowa would part with before pocketing the small treasure and quickening their pace back toward the palace proper.

Once inside the courtyard beyond the outer palace gate Trowa turned "Which way are your Quarter's?" Trowa asked and Quatre smiled and wrapped his arms around Trowa's waist.

"You mean OUR quarter's." Quatre purred and Trowa growled as he plastered his lips against Quatre's.

"That wasn't my question pick pocket. Lead the way or I take you here." Trowa threatened and Quatre giggled taking Trowa's hand.

"This way." Quatre said and it was almost an all out sprint towards the large double doors at the end of the corridor.

Quatre had to blindly fumble for the handle as Trowa snatched him up into powerful arms and began to render him numb from the passion in his kiss. The latch turned and they stumbled in, lips still connected in a growing tempest. With one foot Trowa kicked the door closed behind them as his hands fought to rid Quatre of the layers of thin cotton that were draped over his body. Ever pushing Quatre closer and closer to the bed on the far side of the room.

Quatre's fingers fumbled with Trowa's short vest, he had to see Trowa's skin, his whole body was on fire, and Trowa's emotions were powerful and lust filled, and beginning to take control over Quatre's senses. It was the price of tempting the storm; Quatre knew this and thrived on the sensation. No one he had ever known before or after he met Trowa had such intense inner fire and emotions, yet so guarded were those emotions Trowa appeared to most as a cold and unfeeling wall. He was in fact, quite the opposite. He had more passion and more love for life in one little finger than most would ever possess, and he let his walls crumble and Quatre was awash in the glory of feeling that was Trowa's inner self.

In essence, Quatre was literally blinded with feeling and his gifts drank in Trowa's emotions obliterating all other things around them. Trowa had become the world's center, everything revolved around him, and Quatre rejoiced in the sensation. Love was the be all and end all of the universe, and that love was directed at Quatre with an overwhelming force.

"Quatre." Trowa breathed into the crook of Quatre's neck as the last remaining garment covering his golden lover pooled around their tangled feet. It only took for Trowa to slightly lean forward, and Quatre fell back onto the bed behind him. Trowa stood, hovering over the prone body splayed out delicately on top of crisp pastel sheets. Quatre's lips swollen with passion and his skin flushed with excitement, nothing was more beautiful in Trowa's eyes.

Possession, need, desire, want, lust, and above all love coursed through Trowa's veins and out of his body to flood Quatre with sensation. Quatre wallowed in delight as he watched a bare-chested Trowa tower over him, hands slowly moving down that bare chest to the belt around his waist. Quatre's mouth began to water as Trowa slowly tugged his belt free from the loops in his breeches. Breeches that appeared painted onto that sculpted and firm body. "What do you want Quatre?" Trowa teased as his fingers slowly reached for the laces that held those breeches in place. Quatre frowned.

"You." Quatre hissed reaching up only to get his hand slapped away.

"Who was it that said the night was young?" Trowa asked as he tantalizingly undid the laces inch by inch. A Whimper caught in the back of Quatre's throat.

Trowa chuckled deep in his chest as he slowly, agonizingly slowly peeled the leather from his legs to reveal his unbelievably toned body. He may have been reed slender, but he was in perfect proportion and it was all Quatre could do not to reach a pinnacle at the glorious sight of him standing there like a lion ready to pounce. "Trowa, please!" Quatre croaked holding arms out to bring that body back into contact with his own.

Trowa took a step forward, and Quatre moved to the edge of the bed in anticipation once more reaching out to touch his lover. Trowa's fingers slipped into Quatre's hair and Quatre smiled, he knew what Trowa wanted and he wanted nothing more than to give it to him. Quatre ran velvet soft kisses down his lover's chest and abdomen as he slipped off the bed to his knees on the floor. Trowa's body shuddered as Quatre's fingers reached up to trace patterns along Trowa's straining member.

Quatre licked his lips in anticipation before just closing his eyes and taking Trowa inside. Hips bucked and Quatre

began to suckle, drawing a moan of pleasure out of Trowa's throat as fingers clenched almost painfully in his hair.

With a wild abandon, Quatre worshipped flesh with lips, teeth and tongue. His ministrations causing Trowa to thrust forward in a mirroring rhythm, pleasure mingling with pleasure when it abruptly ceased and Trowa stepped away.

Quatre let out a whimper of loss and Trowa merely smiled before reaching down to bring Quatre back up to his feet. "Oh, not yet. I won't let you finish this before it's begun." Trowa said as he again backed Quatre onto the bed, only this time Trowa crawled in with him. Straddling Quatre's legs as hands roamed the soft pink flesh. "By the Maker nothing this beautiful should be real. Yet here you are." Trowa caressed Quatre's senses with his words before raining kisses all over the body pinned beneath him.

Quatre writhed with pleasure as Trowa's skillful hands turned him into putty. A Scent of vanilla teased his nostrils and Quatre opened his eyes with a start as something cold and wet drizzled down his manhood. "TROWA!" He cried with a start and Trowa chuckled.

"You wanted to know what Duo gave me? Now you know." Trowa said as Trowa spread the oily vanilla scented substance all over Quatre's erection. The slippery liquid underneath Trowa's hands bringing tingling sensations all over his body to the point he found no voice in which to speak and could only moan and pant as his world focused solely on the sensations Trowa showered him with in a slow torment.

When those fingers moved to enter him, Quatre's voice still remained a forgotten entity, and he could only vaguely form Trowa's name in a cry as he pushed his hips down against those fingers. This was what he wanted, but more, so much more. He couldn't stand the teasing and just when he was ready to beg for Trowa to do more, Trowa seemed to sense Quatre's need and Quatre felt him move slightly back and then hook Quatre's knees over his shoulders. All sensation ceased for a moment, that moment filled with words Quatre was aching to hear.

"Now I make you mine." Trowa said in a low moan as he claimed Quatre's body in one swift push.

Pain swam throughout Quatre's core as his body resisted the intrusion. Trowa had Quatre trussed up beneath him, his head bent low, his hair brushing Quatre's chest as he panted, straining to move but holding perfectly still. Waiting, just waiting until Quatre took a breath. He felt the tension in Quatre's body fade, and Quatre began to breathe once more, only then did he dare move. Only then and with extreme care did he commence to love this creature bodily as he had always loved this creature in heart, mind, and soul.

Voices found themselves once more as their bodies came together in bliss, and voices sang of pleasure, and love, and names were issued forth like prayers. A steadily rising tempo was echoed in a song of ecstasy as lovers sang to one another as they danced in the night. Never wanting the aria to cease, yet building to a forte beyond their power to control, the curtain came crashing down around them and the music faded to the soft cadence of breath trying to find purchase in lungs too weary and bodies too limp and spent to do much more than bask in the warmth and glow of the spotlight created by their love.

The scent of vanilla mixed with the musk of bodies and lovemaking and clung to the sheets that lay askew and rumbled across the bed. Limbs intermingled, and bodies pressed close as two figures nestled as one in the darkness and allowed the joy of their union to carry them into slumber. A slumber in which to share dreams of a future that allowed them to forever rejoice in the knowledge that no matter where life led them from this point on, they would travel the unknown paths without fear, for where one went, the other would forever be there to follow. Love was the security that bound them as one, and gave them hope for tomorrow.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Twenty

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Trowa as was his wont to do, no matter how tired or how late he stayed up, come first light, his internal clock would wake him in conjunction with the sunrise. That and the elbow currently poking him in the eye didn’t help matters much either where sleep was concerned. “Quatre?” Trowa said softly and a murmur and grunt answered him.

“S’wha? S’not ‘ime, up yet.” Quatre slurred sleepily, his face buried in his pillow.

“I know, but scoot over bed hog or until you learn to share a bed I’m going to tie you down on your side.” Trowa teased giving Quatre a shove to help him roll over.

“You’re warm.” Quatre said in protest moving back and Trowa rolled meeting Quatre in the middle of the bed.

“I knew you were only after my heat. Here I thought you just couldn’t get enough of me.” Trowa teased and Quatre giggled.

“That too.” He said and Trowa tapped him on the nose.

“Too late. I’m wounded.” Trowa said mocking being affronted.

“You are not liar.” Quatre said burrowing deeper into Trowa’s arms. “Go back to sleep, the sun’s not even all the way up yet.” Quatre said through a yawn.

“Can’t once I’m up, I’m up.” Trowa said with a sigh.

“Then shut up so I can.” Quatre grumbled and Trowa laughed.

“Alright, But do you mind if I get up then? As much as I love you, just listening to you snore is boring.” Trowa said and Quatre chuckled.

“I don’t mind, and I don’t snore.” He said snuggling into the dip in the bed Trowa’s body left as he departed it.

“Suuuuure you don’t.” Trowa teased. Quatre really didn’t snore, but Quatre didn’t know that and at times Quatre could be painfully easy to tease. Quatre just lifted an arm and futilely swatted at thin air, vaguely in Trowa’s direction.

“Grumpy.” Trowa teased leaning over to kiss Quatre’s cheek before he got dressed to go.

“I’m sore, I’m allowed to be grumpy.” Quatre said into the pillow and Trowa’s heart stopped.

“Quatre, I’m so sorry.” He said and Quatre sat up.

“No, I didn’t mean it like that. Yes, I’m sore, but oh God Trowa it was worth it.” Quatre said picking up on Trowa’s duress.

“You’re positive, you’re not just placating me are you?” Trowa asked for reassurance, fearful he’d caused his lover pain.

“I’m sure. It was my first time it’s going to take a while for me to adjust. But I’m okay Trowa, honest. Please don’t worry. I love you.” Quatre said bringing up Trowa’s hand to his lips, placing a tender kiss to the back of his fingers. Trowa smiled and sat down on the edge of the bed and pulled Quatre into a tight embrace.

“What have I told you? I can’t help but worry. I love you too.” Trowa said into Quatre’s tousled hair. “And for the record, that was my first time too.” Trowa added softly and a tiny hiccup issued forth from the young man who clung to Trowa’s chest. Trowa pushed Quatre back down onto the bed and pulled the blanket up over him.

“Just go back to sleep.” Trowa ordered running fingers down the side of Quatre’s face adoringly. “No tears, we’ve shed enough to last us a lifetime. Now is our time.” Trowa said as he rose to get dressed once more. “I’ll bring breakfast back with me later. Get some rest pick pocket.” Trowa added as Quatre curled up snug and warm in their bed and even before Trowa had finished lacing his breeches, Quatre was already back asleep.

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Trowa traversed his way through the silent palace, back out through the gardens and into the courtyard. There was one person he had to inform of last night’s good tidings, and try to work into the equation his whereabouts last night, and well, every night henceforth. He could smell the java as he headed up the stairs to the apartments he had been residing in with Catherine. A shawl was hanging from the doorknob. “Okay, so at least she’s not worried where I was.” Trowa said to himself chuckling as he knocked. “Can I come in?” He asked and the shuffling of feet could be heard, a few feminine giggles, a masculine Grunt or two before the door opened to reveal be-robed and bedraggled Catherine.

Abdul looked about ready to flee or fight and Trowa laughed. “You are safe, She’s a big girl and make her own decisions. Only fear me if you hurt her.” Trowa said and Abdul smiled and nodded.

“Perfectly understood. Between her aim with a knife, and well what you could do to me, I think it’s safe to assume I know my place.” Abdul said and Trowa smiled.

“Good.” He said moving over to the percolating kettle on the stove.

“So little brother, where did you sleep?” Catherine asked looking a bit upset she’d run him off. Trowa smiled at her.

“Fear not Cathy, I was more than kept warm. But I think you need to sit down.” Trowa said steering her into a chair.

“What? What’s wrong?” She asked and Trowa shook his head.

“Nothing is wrong. In fact, more is right in my life than it’s ever been. And I mean than it’s EVER been.” Trowa said and Catherine’s eyes widened after a moment’s contemplation of his words.

“You remember? How? When?” She asked looking about ready to cry or sing or both.

“It’s not important how, when was not long after I left last night. And I’m sure you realize that now that I remember who I am, there are some priorities in my life that need attending.” Trowa began, taking his mug and sitting down at the table with Abdul and Catherine.

“Firstly, I’m not sure how much you know already about my past. Or what role Quatre had and has in it.” Trowa began and Catherine shook her head.

“All I know, is that you two met a long time ago, and well I could tell when I first saw the two of you here that you were more than just friends.” Catherine said with a smile and Trowa smiled back.

“Allow me to enlighten you a little before I elaborate on what’s ahead for me, for us as a family.” Trowa said taking her hand to reassure her she was still going to be a part of his future.

“Quatre and I met on board a slave trading ship. I was being taken to the market seeing as I had just come of age. It was sheer luck running into Quatre. He was obviously younger than I was, not by much, but when you take into account how he is now, can you imagine the child he was? He’s never been one on physical stature, I am amazed they found him fit enough to be brought to market for sale to begin with. His owners must have been anxious for a sale. But that’s irrelevant really. What is relevant is that somehow fate brought us together, and even if I tried, I couldn’t even begin to describe what happened between us. We share a bond no words have ever been created to describe.” Trowa began his tale and his audience sat captive by his words.

“For five months we shared a cell together, and in that short span of time we grew very close. He was the only person in my life I have ever been able to open up to until recently. And even now I am loath to trust, but somehow Quatre drew my fears out and cast them away and showed me a freedom I have never forgotten. I felt joy for the first time, and all it took was his smile to make me rejoice. Then I was sold to Doctor “S”, and for years I was bitter that he took me away from the only thing in my life that meant something to me. And over those years I slowly came to realize what I thought was friendship was much more.” Trowa said and Catherine nodded listening intently.

“While I harbored this loss, Doctor “S” took me to his home planet to train me to use my gifts. It was far enough away that the feeble contact I had with Quatre was severed and over time, I had stopped trying to keep the link going. My mistake, I only grew stronger and if I had tried I might have been able to reestablish contact. I’m not sure and I’ll never know. It wasn’t until a few weeks ago I learned that Doctor “S” was one of five teachers brought together to train others like myself. We we’re brought together sooner than expected because one of us had been captured. I was later to find out it was Quatre. And forgive me if I don’t go into detail about that, I never want to relive that nightmare.” Trowa said and Catherine nodded.

“This story I heard, no need to tell it again Trowa.” She said and Trowa sipped from his cup and heaved a sigh of gratitude.

“That brings us to our reunion, and more importantly our future. I’ve always loved him, and his love for me is just as powerful. He leaves me no doubt as to that fact. Cathy, my place is by his side. Whatever our course, whatever fate brings us to bear I cannot leave his side, I will not. The road ahead is going to be hard, and death could be waiting for any one of us at any moment. Right now is just a lull in the storm. The battle hasn’t even begun in truth yet. What we pledged to fight for is freedom, and we will either gain it or die trying. Quatre needs me, he needs us all he cannot do it alone, even with all his power he will need us to fight by his side. I fight for him and because of him. He was the reason I trained so hard, the reason I will fight even harder. He is not a fighter in this struggle he is the light we gain if we win. And personally he is the one I will spend my days growing old with. Catherine you are my sister and I love you dearly. But Quatre is my soul and without him I am nothing. Do you understand?” Trowa explained and waited fervently for her answer.

She smiled and nodded and reached out to take his hand. “I do. Love makes you do crazy things, but there is also no higher purpose. One hang up, I get a bum deal out of all of this. One day YOU’RE going to have a niece or a nephew.” Catherine teased and Trowa laughed.

“Yes, there is that. Think you can survive?” Trowa asked and Catherine grinned.

“I’ll manage.” She said and winked at her brother.

“There is one other consideration in the same vein as Cathy’s train of thought.” Abdul said looking rather unhappy. “His highness will need an heir one day.” Abdul said and Trowa looked cold and lowered his gaze.

“I know, I’ve already thought about that, but we’ll cross that bridge when we come to it. For now you will have to accept that Quatre has more important things to deal with than worrying about an Heir. And until this is finished I am being selfish and taking every moment I can to be there to support him. Once this journey has come to an end, I do realize my place will be in the shadows.” Trowa said and Catherine fumed.

“That’s not fair!” Catherine said and Trowa sighed.

“It’s fact Cathy. King’s need heirs, Prince’s need spawn other prince’s, it’s the way it works. Sadly in this case I have not the anatomy to provide Quatre his heir, and the other fact being is the ones who do carry the right inner workings do not appeal to either of us. He’ll manage, but do not expect him to like it Abdul. I can tell you now he’ll protest.” Trowa said and Abdul nodded.

“What of you?” Abdul asked and Trowa shrugged.

“I’ll manage as well. Just so long as you realize that while he’ll produce you an heir, a queen is likely out of the question.” Trowa said with a glint in his eye. “I can only share so much, and I like my place very much.” Trowa added

and Abdul laughed.

“He wouldn’t be the first Monarch who remained without a Queen but chose a trusted friend to bear an Heir whilst retaining the King’s consort.” Abdul said with a wink as he poured more java into Trowa’s cup. “I certainly wouldn’t want to try and budge either of you personally. I have seen with my own eyes what you can do.” Abdul grinned and Trowa smiled.

“Then there is no problem.” Catherine said raising her mug. “To family, and consorts, and getting through all this in tact.” Catherine said and Abdul and Trowa raised their own mugs and drank of the toast. When suddenly the door burst open and Duo stood there his hair a mess, and half dressed.

“Trowa! We got a problem! We gotta get out of here. Grab your shit; Zechs and Noin are firing up Peacemillion. It seems they found out we aren’t dead, and we got a contingent of ships on the way. Treize is gonna stall ‘em, but we gotta skeedaddle. We’re not ready to fight them yet.” Duo said and everyone leapt to their feet and began throwing clothes and whatever they could carry into bags hastily.

“Go on Trowa, get yourself going, I’ll get Catherine to safety, that witch won’t get her again. I’ll hide her, but they’re after you.” Abdul said and Trowa grabbed his sister in a hug.

“I’ll come back.” He said kissing her cheek.

“You’d better.” She said through tears as Trowa looked to Abdul.

“Take care of her.” He said and Abdul nodded.

“With my life, now go, fair thee well brother. We’ll meet up when it’s safe I’m sure.” Abdul said as Trowa ran with Duo back toward the palace. Abdul took Catherine the opposite direction to hide her from harm.

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Everyone scrambled to get on board Peacemillion and away from the Mag’ua’nac moon. “They must still believe you’re dead, or else all is lost. I’ll quell the rumors while I can. Zechs I’ll contact you later with a rendezvous point and if I can’t Rashid will. For now, the safest place is MO2. Treize said and Zechs nodded.

“Don’t leave us hanging too long Treize, I can’t get them working as a team in that bog of a place. We need a place to train properly.” Zechs said and Treize bit his lip.

“I know, I know. It seems we have one delay after another, I’ll get them a place, but first let’s keep them alive. Now go, wait until I send word, train as best you can, it’s all we can do.” Treize said as the door shut and locked and Peacemillion’s engine’s fired up.

Quatre grabbed Wufei “Help me.” He said and Wufei nodded linking hands with the fellow mage. Quatre seemed to glow a bright golden hue. “Now Zechs, we’re invisible to them, but I can’t hold this long, just get us out of here!” Quatre cried and Zechs slammed the controls forward and Peacemillion shot out of the atmosphere and darted in and out of the fleet of Oz’rialite warships.

“Damn it! They’re right on top of the place. We just got out of there!” Duo hissed from his view by the window.

“All clear, they didn’t trace us,” Noin hollered from the cockpit as she monitored the radar.

“Wait! Quatre! Hold that shield and don’t break it!!!!” Sally hissed rushing to his side. “Where’s that tracking devise they put on him back in the capitol?” Sally asked. And Zechs swore.

“DAMN IT! That’s how they knew! SHIT!” He swore and Quatre shivered.

“Hurry Sally, just cut it out, I can’t hold this much longer.” Quatre said his eyes shut tight and Wufei looked Drained to the bone. Duo’s eyes flashed and he wrapped arms around Wufei.

“Back up’s here, Drain me, and just hold the shield Quatre!” Duo said bolstering Wufei’s stores for Quatre to draw from.

“I can’t find it, where is it?” Sally said poking around behind Quatre’s ears for the devise.

Trowa and Heero both encircled the trio adding their strength to the mix. “Stay strong love. Take all you need to hold it.” Trowa said as he felt their shared gifts mix and mingle together as Quatre wove all the strands of power into a net of concealment. He shook with the pressure of holding the tapestry together.

“There! I got it!” Sally said making a small cut and extracting the homing devise, which she unceremoniously smashed under her boot.

At the crushing sound Quatre let go of the others and fell panting to the floor. The other’s drained of energy fell into each other in a heap onto the floor.

“So much for having to train them to work together love. It seems they can manage it on their own.” Noin said with a smirk and Zechs smiled.

“They can, but it was messy. Look at them they’re exhausted. Too much was used too quickly. But that’s easy to fix, they’ve done the hard part already by themselves.” Zechs said in relief as five weary men lay resting on the floor. Safe for the moment, but now it was a race against time, and a race for their lives.

What other upset would Dermal create for them? Would Treize be able to convince the fleet to turn back? There were a million questions, and thousands of lives lay in the balance waiting for answers. All these five souls could do was flee and re-group and wait for Treize to contact them with their next move.

They were but pawns in this game played between Treize and Dermal, pawns about to become rooks and knights as they waited for their chance to yell checkmate and claim victory.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Twenty~One

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

““Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Treize faced the vidscreen visage of Demail and lied through his teeth. “I told you once, they failed the trials and were privately executed. It is not the Mag’ua’nac way to publicly dispose of those who fail to pass.” Treize said and Demail narrowed his eyes.

“So you say, but why is it you are there?” Demail asked and Treize smiled.

“I happen to enjoy the heat here as does my Lady. Since when has it become necessary for me to relay my private business with the senate? I am not on active parliament duty and my comings and goings do not concern you.” Treize answered calmly and Demail huffed.

“My granddaughter reported you looked awfully intent on the outcome of the trials. Care to explain that Lord Khushrenada?” Demail asked again and Treize plucked up his wine and sipped slowly before answering.

“Would you have not looked so concerned if you saw five humans with so much power? I was merely intrigued to see the outcome. Had they succeeded, you can rest assured I would have taken appropriate measures.” Treize said which was the truth. But he knew Demail would see an entirely different meaning behind his words.

“She also reported seeing the Peacecraft bastard is he with you?” Demail asked and Treize raised an eyebrow.

“If you mean Zechs Merquise, Yes. He was with me he does happen to be one of the few men I trust with the functioning and management of my estates. He was here as per my request, and I have sent him off on more business. Again he is in my personal employ so I see not a reason why I must remind you of this. If I am on trial arrest me, but your veiled accusations are getting tedious. I am not the only Senator with a half breed in his employ.” Treize said and Demail fairly fumed. He knew Khushrenada was up to something but he had absolutely no proof. Looking at his readouts he noticed the homing beacon had become blissfully silent.

“I expect the bodies of these humans delivered to me. Tell your Mag’ua’nac rabble to hand them over. There was a tracking device on one, and it has stopped functioning, I want proof they are not harboring human slaves.” Demail said and Rashid cleared his throat.

“I am sorry, that cannot be done. Part of the ritual of trial execution involves burning the bodies and scattering the ashes to the winds to be born again as true warriors. There are no bodies for me to give you.” Rashid said and Demail snorted.

“Convenient.” He said dripping with sarcasm.

“If you do not believe me, our traditions have been scrolled read there for validity to my claim I am not harboring slaves and the scrolls clearly indicate the ritual of sacrifice to the desert spirits.” Rashid said and Demail just glared indignantly.

“The Tracking devise was sending signals until we entered orbit, can you tell me why?” Demail asked and Treize shrugged.

“Faulty mechanics? I am no engineer; ask your scientists why you received signals from a device burned three days ago. Perhaps you were picking up an echo.” Treize said hoping Demail would buy it.

“Perhaps. But I have my eye on you Lord Khushrenada, do not think you can move without me knowing about it, and if I find you are deceiving me and you are the ringmaster of this human circus, I will personally kill you and your household name will go down in shame. Your daughter Mariemaia I believe is boarding in the Senate’s cloister preparing to enter her second year of schooling. Such a tender age she is, it would be a shame if harm would come to her because of her father’s treason.” Demail said the threat hanging in the air like poison, choking Treize’s heart and behind him Lady Une barely suppressed her gasp.

“Harm my daughter Demail and you will live to regret it.” Treize said shedding all pretense of amiability. No one threatened his family so boldly and lived. Demail was a dead man.

“Overstep your bounds, and you will not only see your small dynasty crumble, but I will make you watch while I slit her throat. Followed by your lovely wife. You tread dangerous waters Khushrenada, the senate does not take kindly to those who seek to topple it’s balance.” Demail said cutting off the transmission before Treize could reply.

“Treize! Don’t you dare stop now. We do this for Mariemaia’s future.” Une said and Treize had a death grip on his wine

glass shattering it in his hand.

“She won’t have one if I don’t step out of the limelight for the time being. I must get word to Zechs, he’ll have to direct this as he sees fit. He knows the plan better than I do. It was his inspiration to begin with he only allowed me to nurture it and help bring it to fruition. I only had dreams and hopes but no means to see them in reality he had the plan, he was the one who knew what it felt like to be oppressed and how we as a culture overlook things as harmless when they can in fact be deadly.” Treize said with a sigh.

“Only trouble is Demail is now looking. It’s going to be harder for these men to gain a foothold and support from others if the fear of Demail’s fleet is constantly breathing down their necks.” Une said and Treize nodded.

“I know, get word to Zechs, tell him to Train and lay low. Let Demail search, he has the attention span of a gnat. He’ll soon grow weary and believe they are dead and no longer a threat. Once he has settled back into his routine, we can begin moving these men around the galaxy sphere. They will gain support, and loyal support. This galaxy is starving for hope, we just need to wait a little while longer before we can give it to them.” Treize said and Une nodded.

“Until that time, your daughter will be safe.” Rashid said clapping his hands. Two servants came in at his summons. “Fetch me my Son.”

Abdul came in shortly thereafter and bowed to his father. “For you to summon me, there must be a problem.” Abdul said and Rashid nodded.

“You need to honor our clan and protect the Lord Khusrenada’s daughter from harm. Take yourself, and whomever you need with you to the Cloister City and keep watch over the child Mariemaia. She has been threatened, and you need to make sure no one can see that threat carried out.” Rashid said and Abdul smiled and bowed.

“Consider it done. Her shadow I will become.” He said backing out of the drawing room.

“And son?” Rashid asked his lips turning into a smile.

“Yes father?” Abdul asked before walking out the door.

“Do take care of that willful girl I know will follow you. I fear there will be hell to pay if the Prince Consort returns to find his sister has met with harm.” Rashid said wagging a finger at his son. Abdul laughed.

“Trust me father, I’ll tie her down if I have to in order to keep her from trouble. I’d like to grow old with this one, but a fine warrior spirit is hard to tame.” He said and Rashid bellowed with laughter.

“I hear you have tamed quite a bit of that she lion. I hope you plan on an honorable course. She is the Consort’s sister.” Rashid warned and Abdul winked.

“Every intention Father, fear not. I’m no fool I will take the oath with her if she’ll have me before I depart.” Abdul said and Rashid nodded.

“See that you do.” Was all Rashid had to say before he let his son depart on his duty of honor; for a Mag’ua’nac was loyal in all matters, be it matters of honor, or of the heart.

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It took four days to reach the isolated asteroid belt that separated the galaxy sphere from the MO planet system. Four planets in all but only MO2 could come close to supporting life. And even that was pushing it. It was a marshy waste of overgrown plant life, even larger insects, and a perpetually rainy atmosphere. Humid at it’s best, chilling to the bone at it’s worst, all of it wet, all of it overcast under ever gray skies. No sun ever broke the thick foggy cloud cover. Only it’s heat reached the land occasionally, the rest of the time it was cold and damp.

Trowa found it fascinating.

Quatre just found it cold as they slogged over the swamp towards the small thatch of tree huts in the distance. “Why couldn’t we fly in closer? Why are we walking five miles through this shit? I can’t feel my feet anymore, and I’m pruned in places I don’t even want to think about.” Duo moaned as he shoved rain soaked hair out of his eyes and shivered.

“It was the only place we could land without losing Peacemillion into the swamp. There’s not a lot of solid ground around here.” Zechs said also feeling the misery of the place seep into his joints.

“I noticed.” Duo said as his foot sank into the mud only to come up with a sickening sucking sound. “Fuck it, I lost my boot again, hang on.” Duo said as his boot remained stuck in the mud. Quatre smiled, but laughter was far from his lips as he worried on what was happening back home. They had received Treize’s message and just the thought of the threats made Quatre want to weep. Abdul and Catherine were headed to the Cloister City, Treize and Une were headed back to the Capitol, and here they were out in the wilds for no one knew how long to prepare. The length of time being so indefinite was daunting. Five minutes here was enough for Quatre to want to leave and go back to the heat he had come to love and to the people he loved even more. He felt a hand slip into his.

“It won’t be forever love.” Trowa said and Quatre smiled, suddenly this place was beautiful, it held the thing Quatre loved most, Trowa was here by his side.

“I know I’m just cold and hungry. Ignore me.” Quatre said pulling his cloak tighter around his shoulders, not that it did much good being drenched and weighing a ton from all the water it had soaked up.

Trowa closed his eyes and the rain slowed to a light drizzle. “I can’t stop it totally, it’s against the laws of nature here, but I can maintain this long enough till we reach shelter I think.” Trowa said and the group collectively heaved a sigh.

“That’s all we can ask for.” Wufei said as he trudged by leaning heavily on his staff in one hand and dragging Sally with the other.

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Standing at the foot of the trees they all looked up in wonder. “How the hell are we supposed to get up there? Holy shit it’s high.” Duo said in wonder, from a distance the trees looked manageable, up close one couldn’t see the tops.

“There are steps and ladders over here.” Zechs said as he placed a foot on one, and the rotted wood gave way underfoot.

“Grrrrreat! I’d fire your maintenance staff.” Duo said “There’s no way in hell these are gonna hold a dog’s weight let alone ours.” Duo said poking another step with his finger, which disintegrated under his touch.

“Who lives here at all?” Quatre asked looking around and seeing no signs of life at all other than insects that made his skin crawl. Not to mention the leeches he’d been pulling off himself throughout the journey.

“No one now. They resisted the senate and were exterminated. All the natives who survived became slaves long ago.” Sally said bitterly. And Wufei snapped his head around and Quatre’s eyes widened.

“Sally, I’m so sorry.” Quatre said reaching out his hand. She smiled softly, tears in her eyes.

“Don’t be Quatre, it wasn’t your fault.” She said pushing his soggy hair out of his face. “And it didn’t rain so much then, it was the weapons they used that turned this place so gloomy. It messed up the atmosphere I can remember the sun shining once.” She added as she reached up to touch the large tree.

“There are more ways to reach the dwellings than just climbing.” Sally said as she closed her eyes and lifted her face skywards. It was as the tree began to physically breathe under her touch and the vines that clung to it’s surface seemed to reach out to embrace her in welcome.

No it wasn’t the vines, something was coming out of them, tiny glowing beads of blue, green and gold light. One flew right into Quatre’s face and he had to gasp in wonder. This was no insect, but a tiny crystal like creature with wings. It landed on his nose and stared intently into his eyes. The tiny translucent fairy opened it’s mouth and the sound of tinkling bells issued forth. Quatre wanted to laugh, but feared disturbing the delicate creature perched on his nose.

“She likes you.” Sally said smiling, covered in the tiny creatures. They swarmed the air like bees, some playing in the strands of Trowa’s bangs, some swinging gaily from Duo’s braid. Heero and Wufei stood stock still as they too were covered with the bright glowing fairies. It appeared they were fighting urges to swat them away. Quatre did laugh then and the fairy on his nose gripped his bangs and laughed with him.

“What are they called Sally?” Quatre asked and Sally smiled.

“Well we used to call them the Crystal Fireflies. I don’t know what they call themselves, but others I’ve learned have called them by many other names. Faeries, pixies, what have you. Growing up among them it was punishable by death to hurt one, even by accident.” Sally said as they played with her hair. “They’ve been lonely, I’d forgotten how much I missed them.” She said with a sigh.

“Lovely, but that does not answer our dilemma, how do we get up to the dwellings?” Wufei asked still standing like a statue as they continued cavorting around him.

“You’ll see.” Sally smirked then laughed at Wufei’s audible squeak when the cloud of Fireflies swarmed him and lifted him skyward. “Don’t struggle Wufei, you don’t want them to drop you.” Sally shouted and Wufei’s rant about wicked women and payback later was lost as he disappeared up into the forest canopy.

The rest soon followed as all were lifted skyward in luminescent clouds of Crystal flies to the lost Dwellings of a ruined civilization.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Twenty~Two

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Duo clamped his eyes tightly shut as he felt the ground beneath his feet vanish. “Oh maker, PLEASE don’t let them drop me.” He muttered as he fought keeping his lunch in his stomach. “Okay this is wrong, wrong, wrong. If humans were meant to live in the treetops, we’d have wings or prehensile tails. I have neither!” He said to no one, since no one was near enough to hear him. It was his way of getting his mind off how terribly far off the ground he was. The tinkling of bells mocked him.

“Sure laugh at me. You won’t fall.” He said and again the bells sounded and he relaxed. As if they were reassuring him they’d not let him fall from their grasp. “Okay, okay. I just don’t like heights.” He said and by his ear a soft chime sang, they knew that already it seemed. As they brought him up fairly quickly and deposited him on the rough wooden platforms that stretched from tree to tree and dwelling to dwelling like streets in a small city. Duo clambered over toward the center where it wrapped around the large tree and he clung to the trunk. Heero was by his side almost instantly.

“I checked Duo, the platforms are solid up here, you won’t fall.” He said softly and eyes still closed Duo nodded. “Open your eyes, look around it’s beautiful up here.” Heero urged and Duo shook his head.

“I’ll take your word for it.” He said and Heero rested a hand upon Duo’s hair.

“Love just look, you can’t walk around with your eyes shut.” Heero again urged and Duo shook his head again.

“I don’t plan on walking around. Right here is just fine and dandy.” He said as Sally walked up.

“What’s wrong with Duo?” She asked concerned and Heero sighed.

“Vertigo.” He said and Sally lifted her chin in a half nod of understanding.

“Ah. I see. I can help I think. Duo you need to look in my eyes.” Sally said cupping his face in her hands. Slowly Duo cracked open his eyes to stare directly into Sally’s soft blue orbs, his eyes never wandering from her pupils. “Just breathe and concentrate.” She softly commanded as her eyes began to shimmer a brighter blue tinged with green. “You will suppress this fear, for that is all it is. Vertigo is a state of mind.” She began then her words became a soft chant in a language Duo failed to recognize. All he knew he was getting very sleepy. The next thing he knew he was slumped in Heero’s arms.

“When he wakes up, he’ll still be a little afraid of heights, but that overwhelming dizziness and fear Vertigo creates should dissipate greatly. Just a little hypnosis is handy once in a while. We had people who suffered from it too.” Sally said and Heero nodded.

“He’s usually not this bad. But then we’ve never been up a tree QUITE this tall either.” Heero said and Sally smiled.

“He’s still brave, even though he was terrified, he still came up. Most suffers would have chained themselves to the ground to avoid the ascent. He’ll be fine he’s tough. And look there, they adore him, he’ll be looked after.” Sally said pointing to the lights that hovered around the eaves of the dwellings intently looking at Duo. Tugging on Duo braid affectionately Sally stood up with a wink. “Let’s get him in a bed over in one of these dwellings. Pick any one you wish, they’re all vacant. Then meet over in the large central commune building. All paths lead to it, you won’t, CAN’T miss it.” Sally said smiling and Heero nodded and hefted his charge to put him to bed.

“I’ll be right behind you.” He said as he chose the nearest dwelling still in relatively one piece and leak proof to place his beloved. As he entered, so did the crystal flies, swooping in and stirring up the dust. They lit up the room and more importantly the bed. In a rush the blankets were lifted and then whisked outside the door to be shaken free of debris. And furiously a myriad more of the tiny critters began sweeping the bed’s mattresses clean as well. Heero couldn’t help but smile as he laid Duo down in a now semi clean bed and the faeries brought the blankets back in to cover Duo with.

“Thank you, I’m sure he’ll be safe with so many guardians.” He said as the faeries began to curl up on him, around him, just anywhere near him in general. The tinkling of bells confirmed Heero’s observation. He chuckled to himself as he let himself out and followed the paths to the commune building.

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If Heero thought the Crystal Flies liked Duo, he was amazed at what they thought of Quatre. He was covered in them; they were in his hair, clinging to his clothes, just making themselves a right nuisance. And poor Quatre just sat there, not sure what to do about it, across the room Trowa glared, arms folded across his chest, not a faerie in sight. He looked livid. “What’s wrong Trowa?” Heero asked as he entered the commune building.

“They are what’s WRONG.” Trowa fairly growled. “I can’t get within two feet without them swarming and running me off. One of the little shits bit me when I took Quatre’s hand to help him into our dwelling. Well HIS dwelling. I don’t think they’re going to let me sleep anywhere but outside the front door at this rate.” Trowa groused and Heero sighed just as Sally walked in behind them.

“What the?” Sally began as she burst out laughing. “Oh Quatre you look pathetic. Just shoo them off!” She said and Quatre looked abashed.

“I TRIED!” He whimpered from his seat, afraid to move at this point.

“Oh here, let me.” Sally said walking over waving her hands around in circle. “Go on boogers, he’s not going anywhere.” Sally said as she cleared Quatre of the clinging critters. He looked relieved as he sighed. Trowa began to walk over and the swarm encased him. Thunder and lightening cracked outside.

“ENOUGH! I’ve had it.” Trowa fumed and the swarm scurried into the rafters. “Sally! How the hell do you LIVE WITH THEM?” He asked and Sally shrugged.

“They were never this bad, but then they haven’t SEEN humans in fifteen years at least. They’re just lonely.” She said and Trowa grumbled.

“Lonely? Try bloody annoying.” He said and Quatre began to shiver as the voices of the faeries began to fill the room.

His eyes went wide, and tears began to fall. “Oh God, tell them to STOP!!!!!!” Quatre said grabbing his head in a white knuckled grip, as the warbling grew louder. “The Pain! The fear! They’re DYING!” Quatre wailed as he curled up in a heap on the floor. Trowa was instantly there to gather Quatre in his arms.

“ENOUGH! QUIET!” Trowa shouted and the storm broke loose outside with a fury. The warbling died down into dead silence as thousands of tiny eyes stared at Trowa. He looked around the room, glaring at the faeries that clung to walls and rafters. “Listen up, you can’t do this to him. We’ll help you if we can, but you cannot do this to him. Understand?” Trowa spoke, hoping they’d understand. “None of us will hurt you, and we appreciate your help. But you cannot demand of him attention, you see what happens when you do.” Trowa said and a soft tinkling began and one flew up to land on Trowa’s arm, tiny iridescent blue eyes fixed on Trowa’s. The tiny head cocked to one side and a soft voice spoke, not aloud however, but in Trowa’s mind.

:: *Storm caller, you have the mind ability can you hear me?::* The tiny man, woman, both, whatever gender it was asked.

*::I can. You understand me and mark me well. You cannot overwhelm him like this.::* Trowa answered and the creature nodded once.

*::We knew not and are sorry. Strong he is and we feed on his light. It has been too long and we took too much. We are dying and he fed us what we need. We need his help so we can restore what we lost.::* The Crystal fly said and Trowa nodded solemnly.

*::And we'll help you get it back, just give him, us space to breathe. We are tired too, we've had a long journey to get here and Quatre used a lot of his power to get us here. He needs time to recover himself before he can help you. And while I'm at it, I don't appreciate being kept from him either. I am the LAST person you need worry about hurting him.::* Trowa said and that tinkling laugh again.

*::He's pretty, they like him for that too.::* The little pixie said and Trowa sighed.

*::Yes, he is pretty, he's also mine. I'm what you would call a jealous man when it comes to sharing Quatre's affections. And biting me again will only serve to get me angry. When I am with Quatre, it's my time with him. Is that clear?::* Trowa said and the laughter was bright.

*::Perfectly storm caller. I'll tell them. And Thank you, we'll try not to overwhelm him again.::* Was the last thing the little crystal Fly said before fluttering back up into the rafters.

"Trowa? What happened?" Quatre asked as he gained control of himself once more. Trowa smiled.

"We just got a few rules sorted out. They need our help, and moreover they love your light." Trowa said running fingers through Quatre's bangs. "They also said that 'you were pretty and they like pretty things'" Trowa said a smile on his lips.

"What did you say?" Quatre asked cocking an eyebrow a leery and apprehensive look on his face.

"I said, yes you were pretty, and mine. I told them to back off I don't like sharing." Trowa said and Quatre laughed.

"I might have known. Jealous." Quatre teased sitting up straight.

“Damn straight. I don’t care to be bitten when I try to touch you. Nor swarmed if I try to get near you. We’ve set up a truce.” Trowa said and Quatre smiled.

“Wonderful, now can we get dinner I famished.” Sally said interrupting them both as she moved to the fire pit in the center of the room.

“Trowa, Heero I need DRY wood. See if you can find some. Quatre, will you help me here. Wufei is with Zechs and Noin gathering the supplies and Duo, the stomach, is blissfully sleeping. Maybe we’ll all actually get to eat something before the bottomless pit wakes up.” Sally said sending everyone one off to do his or her assigned chores in preparation for dinner.

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Trowa and Heero were busting up some old furniture for firewood when they heard Noin shriek. Both men bolted toward the sound, only to end up frozen in place as well. “That’s one BIG ass snake.” Heero muttered and Trowa just nodded, eyes locked on the massive anaconda like reptile that was wrapped around and around and around one of the dwellings. “Don’t like snakes Trowa?” Heero asked as he watched Trowa just stand there unmoving.

“I hate snakes.” Trowa said under his breath and Heero smirked.

“For god sakes don’t EVER tell Duo that.” Heero said as Sally ran up.

“Oh for heaven’s sakes. I forgot about these. However, they taste great. And I would rather eat IT, than have IT eat me.” Sally said looking at Heero. “Well?”

“Well what?” He asked

“Kill it.” She said and Heero looked at her as if she’d gone insane.

“Kill it, riiiiight. With what? I’m strong Sally, but not STUPID.” He said looking at Trowa who was still rooted to the spot. “He’ll be no help either, Duo’s asleep. That leaves Quatre or Wufei.” Heero said as Quatre walked up and yelped.

“That thing’s HUGE!” Quatre gasped and then looked at his lover who was a virtual statue. “Oh that’s right. He hate’s snakes.” Quatre said tenderly taking Trowa’s hand. “And don’t look at me, I have no idea how to kill it.” Quatre said as Wufei and Zechs came running along the deck.

“Bloody HELL! That’s one monster.” Zechs muttered and Wufei snorted.

“Big yes, I’ve seen bigger.” He said and Sally clapped.

“Yay! Guess what you just volunteered for lover? Kill it so I can cook it.” She said and Wufei’s jaw dropped.

“COOK IT?” he asked and Sally nodded.

“Snake tastes great.” She said smiling. “I just can’t kill one this big.” She added and Wufei rolled his eyes.

“Alright, but don’t expect me to eat any of it.” Wufei said lifting his staff. Fire engulfed the snake’s body burning inward rather than out. The Snake dropped to the deck with a thud dead as it smoldered.

“Oh and he cooked it for me too. I knew I liked you for something.” Sally said kissing his cheek as she pulled out her hip dagger. Wufei snorted.

“Woman just do what you plan on doing with it already.” He said rolling his eyes.

“You’re going to try some of this, it is good.” She said as she began hacking away at the hide.

Everyone looked green and not overly eager to eat something that could have very well eaten them. However, the threat of not having anything at all, and having Sally pretty much order them to eat it, they all reluctantly supped. And it even turned out Sally was right, the meat was indeed unusual, but not unpleasant as they ate their fill.

Duo stumbled in midway through the meal and had devoured a goodly portion before Heero smirked, turned to his lover and informed him just what he was shoveling into his face.

The entire room burst with laughter as Duo's eyes widened and half chewed anaconda went spewing across the room to land with a sizzle in the fire pit.

“YOU LET ME EAT WHAT?!?!?!?!?” Duo shouted over the howling laughter in the room. Heero just smiled and returned to his meal. Duo continued to rant on and on about the injustices committed against his stomach and the wickedness of a certain man who was never ever getting any ever again.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Twenty~Three

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Catherine played with the small cuff bracelets around her wrists. A matching pair adorned the man piloting the small craft beside her. “You don’t have to wear them at home love, they just show you’re my wife out in the sphere. I know mine are going to take getting used to as well.” Abdul said turned his face to the woman beside him, lowering his shades to wink at her with those gorgeous golden eyes.

“Oh, they weren’t bothering me in the slightest. I was just thinking and my fingers tend to mess with whatever’s handy.” She said smiling and the wicked glint in her new husband’s eye gave her a warning and she quickly cut him off at the pass. “Don’t say it, It was a bad choice of words on my part, don’t make it worse devil man.” She said and Abdul chuckled.

“I wouldn’t think of it.” He said trying to look innocent.

“Um, hum. Pull the other one.” Catherine said settling back in her seat.

“What were you thinking about?’ Abdul asked as he set the autopilot and turned to face her.

“This and that. For one I cannot believe I’m here. I never thought I’d ever be anything other than a slave. And in the space of a few weeks, I’ve found my brother, was able to escape my owner thanks to Zechs, fell in love, got married, and am now heading back to Oz’rilah incognito to keep watch over a little girl. My head is spinning.” Catherine said and Abdul took her hand and kissed her palm.

“Any regrets? I did ask you spur of the moment.” Abdul said and Catherine shook her head.

“No regrets. Only a request we repeat the oath taking when my brother gets back. He’ll be sorry he missed it.” Catherine said and Abdul smiled.

“Wouldn’t have it any other way.” He reassured softly giving her hand a tug to pull her into his lap.

“ABDUL!” Cathy screeched tumbling into her husband’s lap.

He sat her down facing forward. “Now then, no respectable Mag’ua’nac, man OR woman goes out into the beyond without knowing how to return home. For Warriors may depart together, but may be forced to return alone if the battle is lost. It is time for you to learn to pilot love. Just in case.” Abdul said getting ready to give his wife a crash course on how to work the Mag’ua’nac style caravan craft. Good for trading throughout the galaxy sphere, small and compact, functional, and hidden within it’s beautifully designed interior and exterior an arsenal that could rival an Oz’rialite battle cruiser. Mag’ua’nacs were not feared as a Warrior race for naught. Even the Oz’rialites treated the Mag’ua’nacs with at least a small degree of respect.

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Soon after landing in Cloister City, Abdul with Catherine in tow made his way through the city towards one of the Mag’ua’nac trading centers dotted in just about every large city in the galaxy. Mag’ua’nacs had another reputation as bargain Merchants and traders and their honor was second to none when doing business. It made the Mag’ua’nac people on the whole, quite individually wealthy people as well.

Abdul turned a corner and Catherine gasped, they’d made it to the Mag’ua’nac sector. Rich and intricately designed rugs hung from various windows as decoration. The building themselves painted to mimic the desert sands, and the people wandering the street were dressed in the flowing robes Catherine was becoming accustomed to, it was home away from home. It didn’t take long for someone to spot Abdul and rush over; the merchant bowed low in greeting then slapped his fist to his chest.

“Abdul ibn Rashid Kurama, welcome. This way, your rooms await you and are freshly aired for your arrival.” The elderly merchant said turning to lead them “And congratulations upon your recent oath binding.” He added with a smile at Catherine.

“Thank you. I assume the message stated why I’m here General Anwar.” Abdul said and the old man laughed.

“I haven’t been called General since before you were out of your nappies whelp. I’m retired and like it that way. Anwar or old man will do just fine now lad. Yes, your father told me what I needed to know. All you will need, I have left for you to read over. It shows where to find her, what her schedule is and the like.” Anwar said and Abdul nodded.

“Many thanks.” Abdul said and Anwar smiled.

“No thanks needed, however you could humor an old man with gossip. Please tell me the rumor that I heard is true. Has the heir returned home?” Anwar asked as they entered the small inn and entered the rooms that had been prepared for Abdul. Abdul saved answering before they were securely inside behind locked doors. Even then it was only a nod for an affirmative.

“And somehow I am hoping the further rumor’s of his trial and failure are also unfounded.” Anwar asked and again Abdul nodded. “Tell me Rashid did not try the Prince. It is not done.” Anwar said and Abdul laughed.

“Funny, that’s exactly what my father said. But his highness wouldn’t have it any other way. He may not have a Mag’ua’nac stature, but he’s got our balls.” Abdul said crudely and Anwar howled. Catherine rolled her eyes.

“That’s rude.” She said as the men shared the humor in the tasteless joke.

“But true my love. Come Anwar; let me tell you of the trials, you will not believe what happened in truth. I tell you now I pray I never have to face one of these men on the wrong side of the battle. One of them just happens to be my dear oath bound’s brother.” Abdul began as he related the trials to Anwar whose eyes were as wide as saucers by the end of the tale.

“God’s Truth! Stern stock these humans, who’d have thought? No offense my dear. I mean no disrespect.” Anwar said, suddenly remembering Abdul’s chosen life mate was herself human.

Catherine just smiled. “None taken. Even we humans realize that in comparison to many, we are a rather puny bunch. Believe me we know.” Catherine said gaily looking at the two large men seated across from her.

“Ah but you do not lack the fire of a true warrior. It’s not necessarily size, but spirit and will that can win a battle, and my love here has enough spirit for ten men.” Abdul said proudly and Catherine laughed and shook her hip knife at her large husband.

“And don’t you forget it.” She said giving the blade a gentle flick of her wrist, neatly landing it in a large bowl of fruit. Piercing an apple perfectly. From there Catherine gracefully reached for her knife, and took a bite from the apple still attached to the blade. Abdul blanched and Anwar howled.

“I’m sure he won’t dear.” Anwar said gasping for breath. Fire was certainly not a lacking commodity when it came to the human spirit. It was about time in Anwar’s eyes that some of them had finally decided to fight back.

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After a few days rest, and a few more days cleaning the living spaces so they weren’t temporarily living in years worth of accumulated filth, Everyone decided to take a day of rest and learn their new environment. The rain had become more like a dense wet fog, and hung in the air obscuring vision to a few inches or less. Quatre shivered under his cloak and all the blankets off the bed didn’t help much either. He sneezed, and coming down with a cold from the climate change didn’t help much for his mood either. Between the Crystal Flies hovering constantly nearby, to Trowa’s aversion to making love with an audience, If he could get close at all without some “innocent interference” by a faerie whizzing between them quickly, his dripping nose, and the blasted damp and cold, to say Quatre was feeling a little irritable was an understatement.

Trowa was off with Heero and Zechs getting more supplies off Peacemillion, Wufei was with Sally gathering whatever she felt they needed and in the process was showing him her childhood home. Noin and Duo were off doing something, leaving the one with the cold home to relax. Now he was just bored out of his mind. Quatre stood and hitched the blankets around his shoulders and decided to explore the dwellings a little. At least it would kill some time.

Many of the dwellings had collapsed over the years without repair, but some held treasures untold. Some trinkets of jewelry made of local stones and gems, pictures of long gone people, but this room took Quatre’s breath away. He couldn’t believe his good fortune. It was a music room of sorts. Instruments lay strewn along walls and on the floor, some were beyond repair, but Quatre’s fingers closed around a hard wood case and reverently opened it. His gasp of pleasure was almost a squeal as he lifted out the cherry wood stringed violin and bow. Testing the strings with a few gentle plucks proved they were still sound and had been loosened before the instrument was stored. Carefully Quatre turned the tuning knobs on the end of the thin brittle neck of the instrument, adding the proper tension to the strings to get the right tone and pitch. Once satisfied it was in tune, he turned his attention to the bow. Digging around in the case, Quatre found a block of amber sap resin, and applied a goodly amount to the treated strands of horsehair that made up the bow.

Again he picked up the violin and placed it under his chin, and in a smooth motion drew the bow across the strings. The chord was pure and Quatre’s heart pounded with anticipation. It had been months since he’d had a chance to make music, and his precious violin was still sitting somewhere in Instructor H’s home. So Quatre closed his eyes and took a breath and held it as he began to play. Losing himself to the sweet strains that filled the room, and lifted the gloom from the air with sunshine coming straight from his soul. He didn’t see the room fill with thousands of tiny pixies, summoned by the magic Quatre created with his music.

They basked in the warmth of sound and trilled a counterpoint to his melody. So enraptured with the harmonious sounds, neither Quatre nor the pixies, noticed the rest of the group filter in, also drawn by the sounds that filtered through the trees calling to them, drawing them near to the source. One in particular was especially wrapped up and summoned to Quatre’s side.

Trowa stood in the doorway, his heart racing double time to the tune Quatre played. It took his breath away as it tickled his ears, the pure, unabashed, soul freeing music Quatre played. Trowa’s fingers twitched and his own soul begged to join in the reverie of sound. Trowa’s eyes scanned the room and there across from the door stood a glass case, within

it the chromed surface of a flute flashed in the light cast by the trilling pixies. Trowa crossed the room and pulled out the slender tube and licked his lips in anticipation.

Lifting it, his lips quivered as he blew the first note and his own soul merged with Quatre's. Quatre's eyes opened and he smiled, but the music never stopped, but rather Quatre picked up his tempo, urging Trowa on. Back and forth they played like fencers dueling with notes instead of swords. Then blending as one as tones crashed and molded together in perfect harmony. Even the pixies fell silent and just listened as Trowa took over the counterpoint and added his own magic to the mix.

They played to an enthralled audience until fingers cramped and protested and refused to go on any longer. Trowa's lips were chapped and his lungs ached and his jaw felt like it had been wired in place, he had never played for so long before. Quatre lowered the violin back into its case and shook bleeding fingertips as everyone was slowly released from the spell they wove with music.

"That was the most beautiful thing I have ever heard." Sally said wiping tears from her eyes. Wufei was silent and only nodded his agreement too dumbstruck for comment. Duo looked like he had a million stars dancing in his eyes where he lay curled up in Heero's lap on the floor.

"Stunning simply stunning." Zechs muttered from his seat as he ran lazy fingers through Noin's hair where she sat at his feet, her head resting peacefully on his knee.

"Yes, it certainly was." She concurred in almost a purr as she sighed contentedly.

"I had no idea either of you could play." Heero commented as he fingered the end of Duo's braid absently. Duo was still at a loss for words, and his cheeks were shimmering with drying tears.

The whole room was basking in the afterglow as Trowa slipped his arms around Quatre and pulled him close under his chin. "I had no idea either. It seems we still have a few secrets to share with each other." Trowa said softly noticing Quatre's cheeks were also moist. Quatre nodded.

"Apparently." Quatre said sinking into Trowa's embrace, his heart still fluttering with the joy of the experience. This time, not one single crystal fly interrupted the moment, they too seemed lax to do much else than rest in the rafters and stay wrapped in the dream created with music played from the heart.

Everyone drifted back to their dwellings to finish the afternoon in private company. All too soon the reality of the situation would return and it would be time once again to set aside personal needs and comforts and get back to the task at hand. But the day of rest was still upon them and the mood brought about by a lover's duet was still strong in the air and while the moment lasted all decided not to waste it and enjoy the comforts of a lover's arms while it faded.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Twenty~Four

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Duo awoke and blinked sleep out of his eyes, as he was not too gently prod into wakefulness. “Duo I have been trying to get to roll out of bed for fifteen minutes. Zechs wants us to meet in the communal room this morning. We have work to do if you remember baka.” Heero grunted and Duo flung his arm over his eyes and rolled over.

“I know I know. If you didn’t keep me up half the night either screwing me or snoring so loud I can’t sleep I’d not be so tired.” Duo grumbled and Heero snorted.

“Funny, I don’t recall you ever mentioning I snore before. Nor do I recall any complaints about other nocturnal activities either. Or am I mistaken? Does ‘Oh God Heero don’t stop’ mean something else?” Heero asked and Duo held up one solitary finger from under the covers.

“Bite me Heero.” Duo said and Heero smirked.

“I thought I did, several times in fact.” Heero teased and Duo couldn’t help but laugh.

“Oh you’re in rare form this morning. Who poked you with the humor stick?” Duo said sitting up and shivering as bare feet hit cold floor.

Heero shrugged. “Just get dressed already. I want hot food for a change.” Heero said tossing Duo’s breeches at his stalling lover.

“You don’t have to wait for me you know Heero.” Duo said tugging his pants on.

“If I didn’t make sure you got out of bed, you wouldn’t.” Heero said moving behind Duo with a brush. The previous nights activities had severely entangled that glorious mane Duo called hair. Heero preferred it loose during their private moments and was quite adamant that he be the only one allowed the pleasure of seeing that hair in all it’s glory.

Duo chuckled inwardly he didn’t mind the tangles, not when Heero took such care of combing them out the following morning. Nor did he mind the fact that Heero was a little possessive about him either. It wasn’t an over the top, suffocating type of possessiveness, more of a fear that someone else might see Duo and want him. Even Heero had flaws of insecurity sometimes. And Duo loved him enough that keeping his hair braided in front of others was an easy task to manage. It wasn’t like he was ordering Duo to do it, it was just a request and Duo was more than happy to give Heero just about whatever he wanted.

He felt Heero separate his hair into sections and begin the process of winding the long strands into the plait Duo was accustomed to wearing now. A tap on his shoulder with the comb announced when Heero was finished with his task. “Now finish getting dressed, I’ll meet you there and grab you something to eat.” Heero said kissing Duo’s cheek before getting up to leave. He was so different in Private Duo almost wondered if Heero had split personalities and teased him about it often.

But not this morning, he was too tired.

He let Heero stride out with a purpose and he watched as the ‘other Heero’ pull his persona on. “I gotta talk to Quatre and see if Heero’s nuts or if Trowa does the same thing.” Duo commented to himself as he fished out his shirt and Tunic from under the bed. How they had gotten there he had no idea. Pulling them on and fastening his belt he turned to go outside. Noticing finally the Fireflies sleeping in the rafters and on windowsills. “And Heero calls me lazy? I am so jealous.” He said shaking his head as he stepped out onto the narrow pathway that led from their dwelling to the communal building.

//Fear.//

Unyielding, unquenchable fear rose up in Duo’s belly and made his head spin. What was he doing so high up? Sally’s shiled had apparently been triggered and no longer held his fear in check and it consumed him. His hands flung madly to find purchase on the railing, and his brow even in the cool morning mist broke out in sweat. His limbs shook with terror, and in his befuddlement and stupor Duo slipped.

Gripping the railing with hands that clenched white knuckled in panic, Heero’s name was ripped from his throat in utter hysteria.

//Crack.//

The world became suspended, and time slowed to a crawl as Duo felt the railing give way, and without the support to hold him on the pathway, Duo's weight that had been supported by the railing and now off-balance sent him hurling over the edge, plummeting to the earth below. He faintly heard his name being called in agony as he caught a fleeting glimpse of Heero racing along the pathway too late.

Duo's mind seemed to detach from his body as his body slammed through branches making the silent forest echo with the sound of snapping lumber. He felt no pain, even at the sickening sound of ribs cracking and his arm snapping upon impact with a large jutting limb. His mind was elsewhere, his mind's eye turning back the hands of time to recall memories of past and present.

He remembered being alone; he remembered the joy at discovering the cure to that feeling in Heero. How as children they had clung to one another for support, and how they clung together now for the same reasons. Time had only made the bond and the need stronger, and it was Heero's face his mind's eye painted before with a final blow to the back of his head as his fell, even his mind went into the darkness, forever to hold that last image for all eternity.

//Floating.//

It wasn't as painful as he'd imagined dying to be. Duo had always thought dying would have been excruciating, that he'd know the moment death hit. But no, he didn't even remember hitting the ground. Had the maker blessed him with death before the pain? Many questions surrounded him in the darkness as he floated suspended in the darkness. But the pain returned, he felt that now. He wondered how you could still feel pain if you were dead. Then the voices of angels began beseeching him and beckoning his name.

"I've fixed his arm and ribs. He should be all right. Duo? Come on Duo wake up."

Wait a minute, that angel sounded and awful lot like Sally.

"Duo wake up Duo."

And that one sounded like Quatre.

"Duo! Wake up!"

Okay that one was definitely no angel that was Wufei.

“Koi, please wake up.”

That one was an angel, that one was Heero. Duo raced to that call and opened his eyes. He wasn't dead, no wonder he hurt so bloody much. His vision was blurred but soon focused on the streaked and worried face of Heero. His eyes red rimmed and strained. “Heero?” Duo warbled weakly and was gingerly pulled into a tight embrace.

“DUO!” Heero sobbed as relief flooded him.

“What happened?” Duo asked still in a daze.

“You fell, but thank the Maker for those Fireflies. They caught you before you could fall too far.” Heero gushed clutching Duo tightly. “What happened Duo? Do you remember how you fell?” Heero asked and Duo shuddered. Yes, with clarity he remembered that and began to shake and cling to Heero desperately. Sally reached her hand out and smoothed Duo's hair, which had come undone and now hung in disarray down his back. Litter and debris made of twigs and leaves finding purchase within it from where the braid had caught on branches during the decent.

“I don't think my blocking held, I'm sorry.” She said plucking out the bits and pieces, her eyes downcast with regret.

“What blocking?” Quatre asked as he knelt beside her, lending an absent hand in clearing Duo's hair of deadfall. Heero was too wrapped up in holding Duo to notice or care that they touched his beloved's hair.

“Duo has Vertigo, I thought I'd blocked it from him, but he must have panicked and fell because I'm not strong enough.” Sally said and Quatre put his arm around her.

“No, it's just that Duo is stronger. Weave your shield again; I'll help you make it so he can't accidentally break it again. I do know how it feels to have irrational fears. I have them too. I think we all have at least one.” Quatre said taking Sally's hand. “Let me into your mind, let me see what you're doing.” Quatre said and Sally nodded dropping her shields.

A gentle caress to her senses was all that announced Quatre's invasion of her mind. Soft as a summer breeze he swam in her senses, a light infusing her body making it tingle anew. “Dear God I could get drunk off you Quatre.” Sally said and she heard Quatre giggle.

“Too much, I'm sorry.” He said backing away slightly and Sally felt almost bereft for the loss of all that glorious warmth.

“Don’t be sorry, I think I had an orgasm.” Sally said and Quatre coughed and flushed a bright red as he looked away shyly.

Wufei looked like a stunned deer at Sally’s sentiment and Trowa was trying not to laugh. Sally was ever the bold one, and Quatre’s red hue was just priceless. “Just don’t get used to it Sally.” Trowa commented with a smirk and Sally grinned.

“She’d better not get used to it.” Was Wufei’s response having finally found the tongue he’d lost from Sally’s announcement.

Quatre just turned a brighter shade. “Um, can we take care of Duo please? Wufei take my hand. Let me show you what I’m doing, so in the future you can do this with her. It’s kind of like bolstering power like you’ve already done. But this way, you’re also taking an active part in her healing. If you can see the pattern she weaves you can follow her path and weave an extra shield in with it, sort of making sure all her knots are tight in her tapestry.” Quatre said and Wufei nodded allowing his own shields to drop so Quatre could connect with him also.

Having already felt Quatre’s aura, Wufei was prepared for the effects. He already knew Quatre’s touch was like a lover’s, soft and yielding. Intrusive as it was for him to be in your mind, he never made it feel as though your mind was being raped, but rather a willing lover to the invasion. Once all three were linked, Quatre instructed Sally to begin to weave her shield around Duo’s sense of Vertigo.

Quatre following closely behind with Wufei in tow, every twist and turn she made as she called her gift to her hands they were with her. Every time she tied a knot in her invisible embroidery around Duo’s frightened mind, Wufei was there making it tighter, Quatre directing his gifts as he learned the art of double shielding hands on. “It’s easy to see how he broke your shield Sally, and it’s not your fault. His fear is quite intense, and his power is far stronger than yours. Power does not like to be contained, and fear in and of itself is a strong negative energy. His just happens to be bolstered by his own natural gifts. One leak and the dam burst. He won’t break this now.” Quatre said as he helped Wufei add one more shield on top of Sally’s.

Duo slumped in Heero’s arms as the trio pulled away. As before a deep slumber fell upon him as their shield took hold and imbedded itself in his subconscious mind. Heero lifted him and carried him back into their dwelling and laid him back in bed. Trowa was standing by the door as Heero turned.

“Let’s fix this railing first off. Even if he hadn’t have panicked, too much weight on this would have sent him falling anyway.” Trowa said and Heero nodded.

Shortly thereafter saw Trowa and Heero lashing and securing new supports to the platform and railing. Zechs also lending a hand with the ropes to secure the new framework Heero and Trowa built. While Noin, Quatre and Sally were braiding new ropes as fast as their fingers could work. Wufei was mixing a tar like substance that was creating foul

stench as it brewed, but according to him once applied to the ropes and the framework it would cure them and prevent weather damage in the future. Once they were finished, it would be better and stronger than ever before.

They were getting pretty good at this teamwork thing. Each of them had knowledge of something the others didn't. And the more they shared openly with one another to overcome problems, the more they all learned and benefited.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Twenty~Five

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

The skies wept in torrents and the sound of the rain hitting the leaves was so loud it was near deafening as everyone gathered in the communal dwelling all sitting around Trowa who was seated cross-legged on the floor. Quatre chewed on his bottom lip as they waited for Trowa to do whatever it was he did when conversing with the elements. His eyes opened and dilated pupils quickly adjusted to the firelight. His face an unreadable mask, as usual.

“Well?” Duo asked and Trowa turned his steely gaze towards him.

“You don’t want to know. Let’s just say this storm is the tip of the iceberg. It’s going to get much worse. Whatever the Oz’rialites did to this planet, they have thrown it into a state of chaos. If we don’t discover what is warping the elements and soon, not only won’t we be able to survive here, but nothing will in a few generations.” Trowa said sighing and reaching up to rub his temples. Quatre moved to sit behind him and reached up to rub stiff shoulders.

“Any clue from your searching?” Heero asked from his perch near the window. Arms folded across his chest as he leaned against the wall. Trowa shook his head.

“No, not anything I could reach at any rate. Whatever it is, it’s shielded and dark. I came up against a wall and I just could not breach it alone.” Trowa said turning his gaze to Quatre. Quatre only smiled.

“And you are far from alone.” Quatre said leaning his forehead against Trowa’s temple.

“You won’t like touching what I do Quatre. People are not the only ones with emotions. And this planet is dying, it’s not pleasant where you want to go.” Trowa said and Quatre sighed.

“I may not like it, but it must be done. I’m not eight anymore I can handle it.” Quatre reassured and Trowa frowned.

“Like you handled Duo when we first found you? No. I want you fully rested before we try anything. We’ll only attempt it after you’ve had a good night’s sleep. And I only want you connecting with me after the other’s have. Let them be your buffer zone.” Trowa said and Quatre had to concede to Trowa’s logic.

“I don’t know what good I’m going to be.” Heero said moving into the circle and sitting down between Duo and Wufei. “I don’t have powers like the rest of you.” He said and Quatre cocked his head.

“Why do you say that? You do.” Quatre said and Heero looked confused.

“I’m just strong. Physical strength is not going to be a lot if use in mind games.” Heero said and Quatre laughed.

“Oh Heero, you don’t think your strength comes from just your body do you? You have power, and a lot of it. It just manifests itself in your physical being. But it’s there just the same.” Quatre said and Heero sighed,

“I know that, it’s just I have no idea how to offer what power I do have to you. I just tend to grab on and hope whatever I have makes it through.” Heero said and Quatre nodded.

“And that’s precisely what you should do. Wufei and I can pull what you offer past your physical boundaries just like you did on the ship on the way here. Don’t worry Heero, you’re more help than you realize.” Quatre said and Duo beamed.

“See I told you worry wart.” Duo said and Heero scowled at him.

“What about me, I hope I get to play with the big boys tomorrow.” Sally said joining the group sitting down next to Wufei on the cushions they shared on the floor.

“No, it’s best one of us stand back just incase one gets hurt. We’ll need an anchor to pull us out if we get into trouble. You and Zechs are needed as our safety net.” Quatre said and Sally nodded.

“That playing. At least I feel like I’m needed.” She said and Wufei held her hand.

“Needed is not the word.” Was all he said and his unusual sentiment caught her off guard and her eyes misted slightly. He smiled at her, not with his lips that only upturned slightly, but his eyes were on fire with an emotion so deep it was almost suffocating.

“I love you too.” Sally said softly leaning her head on his shoulder as they sat in the warmth of the fire.

“Duo, make one gagging noise and I rip out your tongue and shove it...”

“OI! Calm down Wu baby, I only tease you not Sally. She can kick my ass.” Duo said and Sally whooped once in a bark of laughter. Duo smirked and Wufei just shook his head in defeat. Between the pair of them, the love of his life, and his reluctant to admit best friend, he was facing a lifetime of torment with verbal abuse. He was a dragon, he could take it, at least he hoped so.

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Catherine sat on a small bench overlooking the park in which a small child with flaming red hair frolicked with other young girls her age. The lovely spring day had brought the students out of the school for a day of games. Now was when Mariemaia was in the most danger. Catherine’s eyes may have appeared to be engrossed in the book in her hands, but her gaze never left the child she was secretly guarding. A ball skipped across the grass to come to rest at Catherine’s feet and the child she was intent in came skipping over.

“Mari! Careful she’s a slave and Her master isn’t around. She might be dangerous!” One of the other girls yelled. Catherine used to being treated like a disease hardly noticed, until Mariemaia halted and lifted herself to a haughty height. Well haughty for a seven year old and spun to face her playmates.

“She has been sitting reading a book quietly, why all of a sudden would she strike. Your logic is horrible. IF she were a slave on the run from her master, she would not be sitting reading a book. If she were a slave she couldn’t even read a book. “ Mariemaia said matter of factly and then spun on her heels and once again went to retrieve her ball. That had Catherine choking back a laugh, as she was now holding out the ball to her. This was undeniably Treize Khushrenada’s daughter. She carried his air of authority and regal bearing on her small frame.

Mariemaia reached out and grasped the ball without fear from Catherine’s hands. “Beg your pardon human lady. They’re silly and my father says humans have feelings too and I’m sorry if they hurt yours.” Mari said with a slight curtsy as she took the ball.

“Why thank you. We do have feelings, and no they didn’t hurt mine dear.” Catherine said and Mariemaia smiled.

"I knew father was right. He's always right. My Father's Lord Khushrenada he's part of the Senate." Mari said proudly and Catherine chuckled and leaned over propping her elbows on her knees and chin on her hands.

"I know. And I am here to look after you for your father." Catherine said with a wink and placing her finger against her lips to show it was a secret. "He loves you very much and is sorry he cannot be here with you. Now go play dear and have fun." Catherine said and Mariemaia smiled.

"I thought you were watching me. Cause you haven't turned a page in a long time." She said and Catherine nearly choked. The child was incredibly astute. "But I knew you were alright. It's the other lady that scares me." Mariemaia said and Catherine froze.

"What other lady?" Catherine asked fearing the worst.

"The one that just started working as the new Mistress of Dorms. She's real scary. Miss Dorothy looks at me funny." Mariemaia said and Catherine's blood ran cold.

"Dorothy Catalonia?" Catherine asked and Mariemaia nodded. "Damn it. This isn't good. Honey you need to come with me. I cannot let her near you, she'll hurt you or much worse." Catherine said and Mariemaia nodded and dug her toe in the dirt.

"I thought so, I had a bad dream where she came into my room when I was sleeping and took me away. And Mama says my dreams sometimes are real but I'm not old enough to tell which of my dreams are just dreams from the ones that Mama calls visions." Mariemaia said and Catherine held out her hand.

"I think this time we not wait to see if it was just a dream. Now you have to trust me dear, I promise I won't hurt you or let anyone else hurt you. I'm going to get up and walk around the corner and wait for you. We have to make it look like you disappeared. Or else they'll not let you leave with me. When you get a chance, you need to pretend you're tired of playing and walk over to meet me. Then we'll go where it's safe understand?" Catherine asked and nearly chuckled with the determined look on Mariemaia's face. Her words almost sent Catherine into hysterics.

"I understand. I'm not stupid like they are." Mari said gesturing to her playmates before scampering back as if all was normal. Oh she was arrogant, a Khushrenada through and through. Catherine adored her, but how to hide her long enough to get back to Abdul who was on the other side of the park? Or he was, he wasn't on his bench anymore. His hand on her shoulder nearly sent Catherine out of her skin.

"I heard, let's get out of here. Clever kid." Abdul said and Catherine nodded as they meandered around the corner as if just taking a leisurely stroll.

“Too clever.” Catherine said as they moved to the bushes to wait.

“Damn it, look there.” Abdul hissed as a tall sleek woman dressed in a high collar midnight blue dress walked up the path, her long blonde hair wound into a tight knot at the nape of her neck. Catherine shrank a little into her husband. She couldn't help but retain a little fear; she had been that woman's slave since they were both children.

“Girls, time to come inside now.” Dorothy called sweetly wearing her new disguise well for those who didn't already know how rancid she was on the inside. Sugar coating was only deceiving to the eye. A crowd of girls began to walk down the path behind Dorothy. Mariemaia among them her eyes scanning around, Catherine stuck her hand out of the bush and Mariemaia spotted it and edged closer. When Dorothy turned her back to lead the girls back to the school Mari ducked into the bush cover and remained silent as all the girls save one returned to school.

“That was way too close.” Abdul said as everyone vanished from view.

“By the Maker it was. No doubt about it Demail means to follow through with his threats. He only uses Dorothy for his most important tasks. We have to get Mariemaia out of here.” Catherine said and Abdul nodded.

“But to where? We can't keep her in the city, nor can we take her back to her home. If we take her to the moon they'll track her, Demail knows we Mag'ua'nacs back Treize in the Senate. We have to take her where they won't think to look for her.” He said and Mariemaia cleared her throat.

“We can go see Miss Relena. She's a friend of my father's she'll know a place to hide us.” Mari said and Abdul smiled.

“Then let's go pay the Princess Peacecraft an unexpected visit.” He said as they made haste away from the school as fast as they could without drawing any untoward attention. The last thing they needed was for people to notice them and remember seeing two strange people with a young Oz'rialite heiress roaming the streets when she was obviously from the school and shouldn't be out of it's grounds to begin with. Abdul rapped her in his over tunic to hide her uniform as they kept to the shadows and held their breath praying for their luck to hold out.

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“So, it begins. So nice to see you again Catherine, I missed you. Lead me to those behind this charade.” Dorothy said as she peered into her ring. He view came from the broach in Mariemaia's collar. The stone of the broach sending visions back to the matching stone in Dorothy's ring. “The best way to catch mice, is with cheese neatly delivered to them in a trap after all. As if I would be so careless as to not be monitoring the child? How little you think of me.”

Dorothy said, her laughter sending a chill throughout her rooms.

“Oh yes, do show me who else is behind this, my Grandfather does so desire the information. How will he take the news that Princess Relena is also in on Treize’s little plan I wonder?” She added before allowing the image to fade and to send word to her grandfather.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Twenty~Six

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Relena sat with her hands folded neatly in her lap as she surveyed the trio sitting in her parlor. “Did anyone see you arrive?” She asked and Abdul shook his head.

“No, not that I could see at any rate.” He affirmed as Hilde walked in with a silver tea service in hand and began to pour their unexpected guests a soothing beverage.

“And to what can I owe the honor of your visit? I’d hazard to say this is not a social call.” Relena said taking her cup delicately from Hilde’s hands and blowing gently over the rim, took a sip of the steaming liquid.

“It’s not. Dorothy Catalonia is after the child and we need to get her to safety. We can’t take her to my home, they’ll know to look for her there. Nor can we return her to Treize. We need a place to hide her safely.” Abdul said and Relena’s brow wrinkled as she thought.

“The Romerfeller division of the senate will be scouring the galaxy for her if they are this intent on focusing their misdeeds on Treize Khushrenada. Their reach is long and tireless. There are not many places I can send you where they do not have an agent to call upon.” Relena sighed setting her cup down with a soft clink against it’s saucer. “Would that this peace we hope to achieve could come about without war and treachery. But my pacifistic nature does realize it’s a dream and war is inevitable to achieve the lasting solution. However stooping to the level of threatening harm to a child is something even I had not expected from Demail and Romerfeller. And the Alliance faction of the Senate isn’t to be trusted either. There are not enough of Treize’s specials to be of assistance. That leaves the Colonial council. And like the Specials they are under the thumb of Romerfeller and the Alliance.” Relena said her mind running through all her possible contacts in order to find a safe haven for her refugees.

“There’s the White Fang.” Hilde said and Relena’s eyes went wide.

“Those radicals? Hardly a good choice since they too would like to see Treize fall.” Relena sighed rubbing her temple slightly.

“There’s the Sank Moon, or what’s left of it.” Hilde said softly and Relena looked crestfallen.

“Yes, what’s left of it. We tried to abolish slavery too one time, or so I’ve been told. I was much too young to remember. The cities are in ruins nothing lives there anymore.” Relena said and Hilde shook her head.

“That’s where you’re wrong love. The Aristocracy may have left, but the slaves and others who had made their home there still remain. Zechs grew up in the aftermath there, as well you know. It’s not a pretty place anymore, but life still goes on. It’s a good place to get lost in.” Hilde said and Abdul nodded.

“It is, inform Treize and Une where we’ve taken Mariemaia please. Assure them we’ll keep her safe. The farther away she is from Dermail and Dorothy, the safer she is. We’ll make haste immediately.” Abdul said and Relena nodded getting up and moving over to a bureau against the wall, digging out a key from the top drawer.

“This was my mother’s, this was the key to her coffers. If anything is left at least you’ll be provisioned. She did not keep her treasures in the palace proper. But rather she loved a hunt, and she had a private lodge in the middle of silver bark forest. It’s not easy to find, and it’s not a grand thing you expect a queen to want. But my mother was one for simple pleasures and if the lodge still stands it will be a good place for you to hide in.” Relena said handing the key to Abdul. He bowed over her hand and kissed it.

“And ever making your mother proud from the Heaven’s Princess Relena. Your generosity is most appreciated.” Abdul said and Relena smiled.

“I do this in her memory. I do this for my brother. I do this so we never need live under the thumb of oppression belonging to the senate. Freedom is worth fighting and dying for.” Relena said lowering her eyelids slowly and exhaling deeply. “I just pray no one needs die in vain over this. Safe journey to you, I will send word to Treize after you’ve gone.” Relena said as Abdul and Catherine picked up a sleeping Mariemaia from the couch and carried her away to safety.

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“Yes, safe journey to you. Go get settled loves, I have some business to take care of with the Princess myself before I can join your little outing to Sank.” Dorothy drawled as she watched the brief exchange unfold in her ring. She removed it and placed it in her jewelry box. It’s purpose now served for the time being. Treize’s biggest sympathizer had been exposed, and was now going to be dealt with properly.

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The hour of day was almost impossible to gauge, the sun never broke the clouds and it went various dark hues of gray to pitch black in the tree dwellings. But according to the clock it was dawn, and five young men drank the tea Sally shoved into their cold hands. "I'll not have any of you go poking around with power on empty stomachs. So sit there and drink, I've fortified it to help get you through this, and I've added a boost to breakfast as well so at least your physical reserves will hold out and bolster you." Sally said brooking no argument. As if any of them would be so foolish to risk a tongue lashing from the resident Healer, one self asserting and bold Miss Sally Po.

Sated and energized Trowa moved to the center of the communal room and lay down on the floor. It was going to be a long time, and there was no need for stiff joints as well after the fact. Wufei settled himself beside Trowa to the left and took Trowa's out stretched hand. "I'll squeeze when I'm ready for you to link with me." Trowa said as Quatre laid down on Trowa's right. Trowa turned his head and forest green eyes focused earnestly. "And you will also wait until I squeeze your hand Pick pocket. No rushing in until I know there's some barrier between you and what you're about to come up against. Promise me." Trowa asked and Quatre lifted Trowa's hands and pressed a kiss into the palm.

"I promise." He said getting comfortable beside the tall and lanky Storm master.

Duo settled down beside Wufei and took the offered hand, he'd follow Wufei's signal and link in when Trowa was ready to add the third, Heero would just lay there open with his shields down and wait until the trio pulled the power from him when they needed it, then it would be Quatre's turn.

All now in place and hands linked physically to help aid the inner connection Trowa closed his eyes and let his senses pull him into the planet itself to a realm beyond physical restraints and boundaries.

Swirling rage and anguish sought the call of it's brethren, the human soul who mirrored the violence and chaos of nature. The wind whispered it secrets of howling despair to the human voice that knew and understood the unspoken language. Who answered back with promises of deliverance and freedom from the struggle for control. Offering his soul and vessel to the elements that sparred with each other in never ending battles for domination. Earth fought with Air, and Fire with Water. Meeting, undulating and shifting the balance of power from hand to hand as one lost grip and the scale tipped before the pattern repeated again. Never ending, never finding that perfect balance it sought to achieve to end the war and bring back the harmony it had lost.

Trowa walked the battlefield with a long familiar grace, and a path opened to him. There he stopped amidst the colors of confusion, anger, and hatred for those that had rendered the harmony with an unnatural discord. Here the journey would begin, but today he would not travel the paths alone.

Wufei felt the squeeze and soon his inner self stood with Trowa on the plains of uncertainty, and tears rolled down his face as he felt for the first time Trowa's true power and where his power came from. He felt the pain, and the darkness come up to swallow him whole. Trowa's upheld spirit hand held the mists at bay.

"This is my world. Yet it isn't always quite this bad. The darkness here is much blacker than anything I have ever encountered. Do not let go of the link, no matter what happens here, if you retain the link with me I can find you again. If you get lost in this pitch black and sever your tie with me this will be your eternity. Understand?" Trowa asked and

Wufei could barely form a yes. His unformed words were lost and stolen from his throat by a spectral wind wraith before he could utter a sound in which to speak.

“You have no voice here Wufei. The language spoken here is something you cannot hope to fathom, just do as I tell you to do and all will be well.” Trowa reassured and Wufei nodded. “Good, tell Duo he can join us.” Trowa said and the part of Wufei still in the real world squeezed Duo’s hand and a third spirit formed and stepped from the mists into the plateau where Wufei and Trowa stood.

“How did I know your mage signature would look like this?” Trowa remarked to the young man robed completely in black. His cloak with an oversized cowl draped in folds over his shoulders, his hair freely flowing and his violet eyes ablaze with inner light, an eerie addition to the already tempestuous backdrop that surrounded them.

“And I can say as much for you. We don’t choose what we look like on this plain; our gifts do that nature boy. Do you know what you look like?” Duo asked not with words, but with his eyes as he scanned Trowa from head to foot and humor sparked briefly behind the pain that this place caused one to feel and Trowa shook his head, there were no mirrors on this side. He’d expected Wufei to look as he did, Quatre had described in detail how Wufei appeared when he was walking over the coals during the trials. The dragon scaled armor sat proudly upon his frame and sang of his bloodline and heritage. But he never had seen himself and had no idea what he looked like in the slightest.

“Well, you’re green for starters, and if I didn’t know any better, I’d say you’re awfully tall for an elf.” Duo mouthed silently and semi pantomimed informing Trowa with gestures what he did look like in mage sight. Trowa’s face held no reaction. He only nodded and repeated his warnings about maintaining constant contact at all times to Duo. Then it was Heero’s turn and Wufei drew him into the central plain.

To no one’s shock, Heero looked, exactly like Heero. Only one addition to his inner self, and that was a brilliant sword was strapped to his back and his red cape fluttered about him as he stopped beside his lover and raised an eyebrow as he surveyed the group. It was obvious he had not expected the multicolored apparitions in this sea of writhing tempests and overwhelming emotions that even Heero with very little usable sense could feel about to choke him. Trowa once again repeated the warnings, and then began building the buffer zone. Creating a watery wall from the mists around them to act as a shield to protect them, but more importantly, protect Quatre from the mists they were about to enter. The feelings and dread were bad enough on the fringes where they stood, and if Heero could feel them, they’d kill Quatre. And this was just the perimeter; they were going to be headed right into the eye of the hurricane, to the very heart of the problem. It was going to get much worse.

Once Trowa was satisfied with his shield he turned to Wufei and the armor clad man began weaving his fire into the shield, and added barrier to protect them from harm. Blue waves and Red lightening encased them one shield over and under another. Once the two domes were up, Duo stepped in to add the third, a violet hued glow formed, a nearly transparent light was the next shield within the dome of protection. It was time to call Quatre into the fold.

Quatre felt the gentle pressure on his hand and linked easily with his lover and let himself be pulled down along Trowa’s trail and Quatre felt himself evaporate into the plains of mage sight.

Within the dome a shimmering and twinkling like stars began to start and the random flashes of light began to take the vague shape of a human wearing a cape of sorts. More clarity, no it wasn't a cape, it was something else, then the light flashed blindingly bright as the massive power that was Quatre's mage signature fully came within the protection of the barrier and formed the image of it's bearer within the realm where all power was born from.

The light dimmed as the figure became Quatre's projection in the plain between life and death. And not even Trowa had envisioned what they now saw before them.

Light radiated from golden hair like a halo, and pale skin reflected even softer luminescence. Wide eyes that had seen countless ages sparkled, the same blue green shade of Quatre's own eyes, but no pupil, just a sea of endless color that showed a galaxy of stars in the expanse. A whole universe was reflected from inside Quatre through his eyes. Like Duo he was dripping in oversized robes that seemed to be stirred by invisible breezes. But the most breathtaking feature of all, sprouting from Quatre's back were the most brilliant white wings. They were spread wide, brushing against the ceiling of the dome as Quatre's spirit self became whole. Once fully reformed, Quatre's wings slowly folded down against his back. And he cocked his head as he saw his friends looking at him so strangely.

"Love, you have no idea just how beautiful you are." Trowa said on his knees now before the man he loved. He knew Quatre's mage signature would be beautiful but never in his wildest dreams did he expect what stood before him now. None of them had, and all of them just stood dumb for a moment trying to drink it all in, it was too unreal, Quatre was no mere mage, he was an avatar!

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Twenty~Seven

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I'm here for your love and I'll make my stand. We we're born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Night cast it's shadow across the smooth and elegant pathways and streets that meandered between the luxuriant houses that sat atop one another in the Capitol City's upper class district. Only the very elite of the senate and those holding principalities for conquered worlds were granted entrance and allowed to set foot within the higher echelon community. Dorothy was one of them and she held her head proudly as her footsteps silently scuffed across the pavement. Her skirts rustling about her ankles making the barest whisper of sound as the thick fabric moved in rhythm to her gait.

She paused at the oxidized intricate bronze gates that were the entrance to the Peacecraft manor. It's alabaster and ivy covered walls illuminated by soft landscape lighting and in the twilight made it seem a near magical haven.

Illusions mind you did nothing for those who knew the ways of power as intimately as Dorothy did and with a gentle wave of her hand the gates parted and silently fell back to grant the newcomer entry. Swinging shut once the commanding witch crossed the threshold and with an almost inaudible click the bolts slid home behind her effectively barring both escape and rescue.

With deadly grace Dorothy made her way to the large arched doorway of the chateau and as if merely paying an old friend a visit, she gently rapped on the door. A young maid opened the door and painting on her most brilliant smile Dorothy spoke. “I'm an emissary from the senate and bring a message to the Princess Relena.” Dorothy said amiably and the maid ushered Dorothy inside.

Entry gained with no alarm raised; which had been Dorothy's intent, she made another wave of her hand and her ring blazed a blood red and the young maid fell lifeless to the floor. Dorothy stepped over the fallen body and laughed with a breathy menacing quality. “Sleep tight dear.” Dorothy said as she took a few steps into the foyer. “Now, where oh where are you Miss Relena. Come out come out wherever you are.” Dorothy almost sang as she disappeared down one of the myriad of hallways leading from the foyer into the main body of the manor. Like the lioness hunting and stalking her prey, she crept into the quiet Peacecraft estate, silently moving through the shadows remaining unseen until it was time to strike.

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“Hilde what’s wrong?” Relena asked her lover who sat unusually quiet in her favorite chair.

“I don’t know. I just feel odd. Like something bad is about to happen.” Hilde said casting worried glances out of the window.

“Something bad is about to happen. But the end will justify the means.” Relena said moving to sit upon the arm of the chair and running gentle fingers through the short midnight strands of Hilde’s hair.

“That’s not what I meant Lena. I mean here and now something feels off. Not the stirrings of conflict your brother and Treize are planning.” Hilde said getting up to pace the room.

“You always worry a bit too much Hilde. It’s just the visit from that Mag’ua’nac and Mariemaia that set you off. Your mind is playing games with you love.” Relena said lazing back into the seat recently vacated.

“Yes, I know, but I can’t help it. What if they were followed? I think it’s best we leave ourselves.” Hilde cautioned and Relena yawned.

“Perhaps it would be prudent for you and I to take a small sojourn away from the city. Until the disappearance of the little Baroness dies away at least I think. But not tonight, I am far too tired.” Relena said yawning once more.

“I think delay would be foolish Lena.” Hilde countered nervously shifting from foot to foot. Her gut making her want to jump at every noise was screaming at her that something was wrong.

“It’s a night Hilde love, I think we can survive the night. We’ll leave in the morning alright?” Relena asked but Hilde’s face had frozen and her eyes widened with horror. Relena whipped her head around to see what Hilde was looking at and there in the doorway stood the answer.

“Leaving here Princess? Oh I think not. I have some questions for you first.” Dorothy sneered stepping into their private chambers and shutting the door behind her.

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Trowa lead the way down the paths that lay unseen through the mists and darkness of his plane of power. The hand in his trembled and Trowa turned to look at the Avatar by his side. Quatre's face showed obvious signs of strain. "Go back. It's only going to get worse Quatre." Trowa said and Quatre shook his head.

"No, I'm alright." He said and Trowa stopped and turned in his tracks and folded his arms over his chest.

"No, you're not. I feel about ready to fall down and weep this taint is so oppressive and that's through three layers of shields. You don't have to be so brave. No one will think the less of you if you turn back. Your powers have a basis in emotion and this turbulence is something none of us can hope to comprehend let alone understand what you're feeling from it." Trowa said, trying to get Quatre to turn back.

"No, you may need me. I'm fine." Quatre said once more taking a step forward.

Trowa's hand latched onto him. "Do not lie to me Quatre, you're rotten at it, look how you are shaking." Trowa said frowning. "And not only here, I can feel your real hand in mine too you know. On both planes you tremble do not force me to send you back." Trowa glared and Quatre's brow furrowed and he shimmered.

"Do not treat me like some babe you need coddle. Last time I looked I had a dick of my own. YES, this place hurts beyond belief, YES I would love to turn back, and YES I want to sit down and cry, but damn it Trowa some things must be done whether I like it or not. What kind of man would I be if at the very first sign of trouble I turn tail and flee like a child?" Quatre fairly bristled and Trowa had to blink repeatedly before it sank in that his calm, quiet and usually submissive Quatre was giving him the third degree. What was worse was Quatre was right. He was being rather overprotective now that he thought about it.

"Point taken. I'll not press." Trowa said holding out his hand once again which Quatre took gratefully as they continued upon their course towards the center of the whirling maelstrom.

They finally came to a point where Trowa drew up short. "Here is the wall. This is as far as I could come yesterday something is here blocking the path can you feel it?" Trowa asked and Duo shivered.

"Decay, Festering Death." He said his eyes throbbing and pulsating like a heartbeat. "The amount of lives lost to this is innumerable." Duo choked out as tears collected on his cheeks. "Senseless waste, and restless life forces trapped here like caged animals. Something massive happened, suddenly trapping these spirits to this spot." Duo said and Quatre nodded.

"I think you're right. I can hear them." Quatre said moving towards the edge of the shield. Reaching his hand out and through.

"Quatre! NO!" Trowa gasped lunging for his lover and pulling him back into the safety of the shield. "Are you mad? Don't leave this shield Quatre. There's not only spirits out there, and with the power you radiate they'll be drawn to you. This place welcomes travelers, but nary lets them out again. This plane is violent Quatre, power feeds on power, this place will claim you in a heartbeat if you do not stay with me." Trowa said gripping Quatre's shoulders and shaking. His terror keen and his eyes wide with panic, seeing Quatre almost lose himself was enough to stop Trowa's heart. Quatre pried Trowa's hands loose and stepped back.

"Have faith in me, I'm not so frail as you seem to think. You must trust me, I know what I'm doing." Quatre said spreading his wings. And with a massive down swoop, Quatre was airborne and out of the shield before Trowa could react and stop him.

"QUATRE!" Trowa howled as his lover vanished into the mists beyond.

"Don't panic Trowa, I can feel him. And if I can you must." Duo said and laid his hand on Trowa's shoulder. "He's maintaining the link." Duo reassured and Trowa calmed down enough to reach out and yes, Duo was right Quatre was still in contact.

"What is he doing?" Trowa asked frantically pacing. Wufei planted his dragon staff into the ground at their feet and began to chant.

"Duo, lend me your sight. What are these spirits doing?" Wufei asked and Duo closed his eyes and reached out with his gifts.

"I don't know there's still a lot of confusion out there. No! NO WAIT! Something's happening." Duo hissed and Wufei nodded.

"I feel the power surge, Quatre's doing something." Wufei said holding out his arms. "Quickly everyone lend me your power and I will send it to Quatre, we must ensure this link and keep him stable while he works." Wufei ordered and all four men huddled together. Wufei concentrating on Quatre while Duo gave an account oh what he sensed was happening around them.

"Can you hear the music?" Duo asked and just as he did a voice broke through the howling wind like a reed whistling in the gale. A soft tenor voice singing not with words, but a charged emotional cry, the tones painting pictures of green pastures and blue skies, of wildflowers and fresh clearwater streams, of sunlight making prismatic rainbows in dew

drops upon the grass. Every peaceful pleasure nature had to offer was reflected in the lilting melody that washed over everything and everyone. Duo held his breath and seemed in a trance.

“Duo what’s happening?” Wufei asked and through sobs Duo spoke.

“He’s guiding them home. He’s freeing them.” Duo said in a hushed whisper as he felt the confusion begin to melt away and the restless energy begin to dissipate. The angry elements still wailed, but the life forces trapped within this place were being shown a way out. But the question in everyone’s mind was how was Quatre doing it?

Sally, Zechs and Noin sat with mouths agape as they watched what appeared to be ghosts literally stepping OUT of Quatre’s body. “Heavens! May the Maker be merciful!” Sally gasped falling to her knees her eyes overflowing with tears as she watched Quatre become a living conduit to draw out of the plane beyond the spirits trapped within. Using his ties to the real world to create a pathway from one realm to the next.

Once the Spirits were free, they faded completely into nothingness, finally at rest.

“He’s pale, he can’t hold this.” Sally said as she lay down next to Quatre and letting her healing strength help his physical body cope with all the power rushing through it as if it weren’t there at all.

Trowa looked up just as the music died, and just in time to see Quatre falling. He rushed over to catch Quatre’s projection as it barely managed to glide back into the safety of the shield. He looked deathly pale and his aura was sickeningly translucent and dim. He looked positively haggard. “Quatre, you stubborn idiot! What did you do?” Trowa asked as he cradled the young man in his arms.

“Moved your road block, they were lost, and I just gave them the means to go home.” Quatre said and Trowa gasped.

“You didn’t. What of your real body Quatre? What have you done to yourself? You can’t go about letting spirits use you as a ladder, they’re dead you’re not.” Trowa scolded knowing that Quatre could have opened himself up to a possession or much worse.

“They needed me, and Sally helped me. My body is fine.” Quatre said leaning into Trowa’s embrace. “Just give me a moment to collect myself, I’ll be fine in a minute.” Quatre said as his aura and hue began to stabilize.

“What trapped them here?” Heero asked and Quatre shrugged.

"I don't know, I can only guess that their deaths were quick and unexpected and the chaos and confusion it caused encased them in the moment of death. I just sang of home and peace and prayed I could release the fear that kept them rooted here. It worked." Quatre said and Trowa growled.

"Trust me, have faith in me you said, and all this time you were playing a hunch?!" Trowa said angrily.

"A sound hunch, but yes." Quatre said meekly turning repentant eyes to his lover's signature. Trowa was not amused.

"If I have to put a leash on you I will. Don't risk yourself on guesswork Quatre!" Trowa said through clenched teeth.

"It was logical conjecture, not guesswork. It worked." Quatre countered and Trowa snarled.

"It was a stupid risk."

"A Gamble that worked."

"It could have backfired."

"But it didn't."

"I very well could have. That was asinine Quatre!"

"Hello? Can we get bitchy later please? We have a job to do, and you two arguing, while entertaining, is getting us nowhere." Duo said and reluctantly Trowa stood.

"We'll discuss this later." He said and Quatre lifted his chin defiantly.

“Oh yes, we most certainly will.” Quatre said back just as angry now. He had to break Trowa of this habit of treating him like a fragile glass ornament instead of a man more than capable of taking care of himself.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Twenty~Eight

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Dorothy stood casually with her back against the door. “Get out.” Relena ordered with a regal bearing as she sat coolly in her chair. Hilde behind her trying to scan the room for anything she could use as a weapon.

“Now is that anyway to talk to a guest?” Dorothy countered a smug smile tugging at her lips.

“An uninvited one. You will remove yourself from my home.” Relena once again ordered. Her voice remaining calm while her insides quivered with fear.

“I will remove myself when our business is complete and not before. Do not order me around Princess, or should I say Traitor of the senate?” Dorothy replied cutting directly to the point. The ever so slight widening of Relena’s eyes the only indication to fear in Dorothy’s words.

“Traitor? Those are hostile words. Words that cannot be substantiated in fact I might add. You have no proof I have done anything that would jeopardize the sanctity of the Senatorial Foundation.” Relena calmly replied as Hilde slowly edged her way toward the fireplace and the pokers that sat by it’s side.

“Proof is in the eye of the beholder. I know you had visitor’s today Princess, a Maguanac, my Slave, and Lord Khushrenada’s daughter. While the Lord Treize himself is currently under investigation for corruption and intent to incite mutiny. By you helping him, you too come under the same scrutiny. Like it or not Princess, you are guilty by association. Unless however.” Dorothy said leaning in close to gaze meaningfully into Relena’s eyes. “You tell us what we desire to know about what Lord Khushrenada’s real agenda is and who his other allies are.” Dorothy said and Relena glared back never flinching as her palms grew clammy.

“I know absolutely nothing about what you are after. I was merely helping a friend with his daughter. That is hardly a treasonous action.” Relena said which was technically the truth if not the full truth. Dorothy called her bluff.

"I heard every word exchanged here Princess. Lying does not become you. I know Treize is planning a war, and I know he is gathering power where he can. You will tell me all you know." Dorothy said still hovering mere inches from Relena's face.

"I know nothing." Relena said and Dorothy smiled.

"Lies again. Perhaps this will loosen your tongue." Dorothy said raising her hand just as Hilde reached the fireplace and wrapped her hand around the poker. The flames leapt from the hearth, and Hilde's heart shattering scream of pain as the flames encased her stilled Relena's blood and all the color drained from her face as she watched in horror her beloved Hilde vanish to dust as the white hot flames consumed her where she stood.

"HILDE!" Relena cried out, the tears falling freely as Relena went to move to her beloved's aide. Cruel hands pushed her back into her chair as Hilde's cries vanished leaving nothing, not even a scorched carpet where she had once stood. The flames drew back into the hearth like wraiths, having devoured only what Dorothy had commanded them to, there was no trace left of Hilde, save for the poker that lay abandoned on the floor where she had only moments before stood alive. There was not even a scrap of clothing left to mourn over, nothing remained. A void of life in the space where she had lived, and a void of echoing agony now paralyzed Relena's heart and soul.

"HILDE! How could you?" Relena asked devastated and shaking with grief.

"In every war there are casualties. Not all of them take place on a battlefield. More oft than not they are lost well before swords clash. How many more deaths do you want on your hands Princess? Tell me what I wish to know and this war will end before it's too late." Dorothy said lifting Relena's chin locking gazes.

"Tell me where to find those humans and it will all end. We know they are not dead. Tell us where Treize is hiding them." Dorothy said and Relena ripped her chin from Dorothy's grip.

"Even if I did know. I'd never tell you. Hilde would never have forgiven me. I will not let her death be in vain. I'd rather die than bow to you and let your malevolence continue to rule. May the Senate crumble and your reign with it! I will tell you NOTHING!" Relena said defiantly pulling her shoulders up high and standing proud. Dorothy sighed.

"You will beg for that death before I am through with you or you will tell me what I want to know. Let's see which one of us has the stronger will power Princess." Dorothy said and no one could hear the screams that emanated from within the Peacecraft manor that night as Relena's trial of wills began. She vowed through the pain that for Hilde she would not break, she would not fail. For had she heeded her beloved's advice her beautiful vibrant Hilde would still be alive. Relena refused to let another achieve the same fate. So she endured and would continue to hold firm until her last breath. For Hilde, for their love, and for all those who still had someone to love in their arms.

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After traveling the never-ending pathways for what seemed like days, even Heero's strength began to falter. "How much further can you tell? He asked their silent guide.

"It's impossible to tell, it's forever changing. We'll know when we get there." Trowa said over his shoulder curtly. Moods and tempers had been strained since Quatre's stunt and the blonde avatar was not too subtly showing his stubborn will by walking a goodly distance apart from his lover. Quatre's face a mask of determination and an inner struggle to stay strong in the oppressive and increasing turbulence of the planet's elemental plane. And enough was bloody well enough and Trowa stopped and spun to face Quatre who nearly bumped into his backside.

"We stop here. We can continue tomorrow since we've breeched the barrier we can return to this spot and continue on once we're rested. Trowa said and Quatre frowned.

"Do you not think we should go as far as we can before we rest? I'm sure we can all go a bit further. The longer we delay, the less time we have and there will be more barriers to breach before we reach our goal." Quatre said and Trowa snorted.

"There is no way of knowing if there will be more barriers." Trowa said and Quatre shook his head.

"There are, they told me we would encounter more trapped here. Three cities were destroyed simultaneously when the Oz'rialites originally attacked. I think we should at least reach the next one before we rest, that way I will not have any travel weariness when I..." Quatre spoke but couldn't finish before Trowa interrupted him.

"You are NOT doing that again. The closer we are to the core the more dangerous it gets out of this shield. I told you once Quatre there are more things out there than spirits that will seek you out. I forbid you. We'll find another way through." Trowa said and Quatre's voice never rose in volume, but his tone was like ice.

"You forbid me? Who the hell do you think you are?" Quatre asked incredulously. "I am the only one CAPABLE of a convergence transfer, none of you are strong enough to withstand that many people without losing yourselves to the transfer." Quatre said and Trowa shook his head.

"So we move them by other means." He said and Quatre folded his arms across his chest.

“Like hell you will, and leave them here? No way. That’s part of what’s wrong with this planet. It can’t heal itself when there’s a tumor in the wound! We have to get them out and the only way to do that is by giving them a link to the outside, and that’s me and only me and you know bloody well that’s true Trowa!” Quatre said his voice reflecting how tired he was of this battle.

“And risk losing you? Not worth it.” Trowa said bluntly and Quatre wanted to scream.

“Then why are we doing this at all? To cure the problem, we have to cure the WHOLE problem. A quick fix will fail in the end and all our efforts will be pointless and this planet and all that still live here will die.” Quatre spoke as his emotional control began cracking under Trowa’s added pressure and tears welled in his eyes. He had to make Trowa see beyond what Trowa wanted and what was best for everyone in the long run.

“You’re tired, we stop. And I don’t care what you say Quatre I am not letting you out of this shield by yourself. I know you’re stronger than all the rest of us put together, but you also have the strongest weaknesses. We will figure out a way to break barriers when we come to them WITHOUT risking you. That’s final.” Trowa said And Quatre glared like he had never done before in his life.

“I don’t recall a conversation where I stated you were my lord and Master Trowa Barton! I am no man’s slave. That’s what this is all about after all, if you remember. I will do what I feel is necessary, when I feel it is necessary and I will weigh my options carefully. I am no fool, nor do I enjoy taking risks, but I will do what I have to do and not even you will I allow to stop me.” Quatre said and Trowa’s lips curled.

“You don’t realize the danger.” Trowa growled and Quatre fairly shook with anger at Trowa’s pigheadedness.

“I realize more than you are giving me credit for. You have no faith in me.” Quatre said and Trowa took a low blow that made even Duo wince.

“Considering what happened to me the last time you took a calculated risk?” Trowa said and instantly regretted it.

“Ouch.” Duo hissed under his breath and Heero just wanted out of this nightmare. Everyone was edgy and tired and if they stayed here any longer this argument was only going to get worse.

Quatre’s eyes were brimming with tears, Trowa’s words stabbing him in the heart like a knife. “I will forever be sorry for what happened to you. But I also believed you when you spoke of forgiveness. I see now the truth. And there can be nothing between people who cannot trust one another.” Quatre began and Trowa’s heart stopped. “Since you cannot trust me, and I cannot blame you for your feelings because I did fail you. So you should also feel no obligation to my welfare. I’m sorry, more sorry than you are ever likely to know. Henceforth I ask you not to trust me, but I also ask you not hinder me in my course. For I still fight this battle. And will fight however long it takes. I ask only your assistance in

the cause. I will ask nothing from you on a personal level ever again.” Quatre said as his projection faded from the dome of the shield and he returned to the physical plane and to his body.

“You fucked up BIG time Tro.” Was all Duo said as he shook his head and faded with Heero, also returning to their bodies since it was painfully obvious they were not going to be going further this day.

“Again I am forced to agree with Duo. I think you need sort out your own mind and what you honestly believe. If you do not trust him, then for the Maker’s sake, do not make illusions to love. Quatre’s guilt is punishment enough; you never saw the torment he went through when he found out what he’d done. I never want to see that again. I never expected you to ever throw that back in his face and I am appalled.” Wufei said shaking his head. “Yes, his weaknesses are more potent than ours, Weaknesses go hand in hand with the level of power you have. You know that as well as I do, better than I do. For I have never seen such a blatant exploitation of a weakness in my life to get your own way. Be mindful of that heart of his, breaking it to save his body is a larger risk to take.” Wufei said fading and returning to his own body leaving Trowa alone to return on his own.

By the time Trowa reached his body, Quatre was nowhere in sight. Having already fled the communal room. Apparently Wufei was explaining Quatre’s urgent flight and her gaze was damning. Trowa had never felt as lowly as he did right at that moment. He had never meant to say what he had said in the heat of the moment, he honestly did trust Quatre. He just didn’t want to lose Quatre; that was the whole reasoning behind his trying to keep Quatre out of danger. But in choosing guilt as his means of persuasion, he might have just accomplished losing his love all by himself, what he had been trying to avoid all along, only worse.

Losing Quatre’s love to death was one thing, losing Quatre’s love while they both still lived was a fate worse than death. So Trowa did the only thing he could do. Seek out Quatre and apologize.

He returned to their dwelling to find Quatre hurried shoving what few clothes he had into a blanket. “Don’t leave Quatre please.” Trowa said softly at the door and a tear streaked face turned to face him. Anger was warring with his grief and the emotional battle was plainly evident in his features.

“How can I stay? You don’t trust me. I cannot live with someone who cannot believe in me.” Quatre said and Trowa stepped in and grabbed Quatre’s shoulders.

“I didn’t mean it. I just wanted... I just was trying to make you see how foolish it would be for you to try what you propose.” Trowa said and Quatre wrenched himself out from Trowa’s grasp.

“You did mean it, and that statement proves it. Foolish am I now? What else Trowa get it all out once and for all. What else do you REALLY think about me?” Quatre asked his anger surging to the forefront again. Trowa cursed his tongue.

“I don’t want to see you hurt damn it.” Trowa said frustrated beyond measure and the violent storm outside was not doing anything for his mood improvement either.

“I don’t want to see any of us hurt. That wasn’t my question.” Quatre said still waiting.

“I think you are stubborn and are too ready to throw your life away.” Trowa growled and Quatre once more began packing his clothes.

“I think you don’t know me at all. I don’t want to die anymore than you do. But I am willing to offer my life as a sacrifice if it will be for the greater good. THAT is what you fail to see in my intentions. I cannot and will not let you stand in-between the goal I am striving to achieve and myself like a wedge. No matter how much I love you I just cannot.” Quatre said walking to the door clinging to his blanket that held what little possessions he had. “I only regret I failed you, the one person I do this most for. But in breaking your trust, I broke whatever we might have had together. Maybe one day you will forgive me, but I will never ask you to again. I have no right to. I pray we can still work together as men after the same goal, please don’t let your mistrust of my abilities drive you from the team. I’ll not ask you to put yourself in any situation where you have to deal solely with me. But we need you.” Quatre said and Trowa’s eyes were blurred with tears.

“Quatre please don’t go.” Trowa said falling to his knees.

“I am going nowhere. I will be here tomorrow to work as planned.” Quatre said and Trowa’s cheeks were moist with tears.

“That’s not what I meant Quatre. Don’t leave me.” Trowa cried in desperation.

“I’m not the one who left. You’re the one who distanced yourself from me. And you were right to do so. You’ll be thankful for it one day I’m sure. You should never love someone you cannot have faith in, it’s bound to end only in pain.” Quatre said tears running down his own cheeks. “I cannot ever leave you, you will always have my heart.” Were his last words as he ran out into the night.

Trowa crumpled into a fetal position on the floor and wept over his loss. It didn’t take a wraith to take his beloved; it only took words of bitterness to push the only thing he’d ever loved away. Trowa had never felt more alone in his life, and he had no one to blame but himself.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Twenty~Nine

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Quatre ran blinded by tears and pelting rain. His heart shattered like glass. He felt Trowa’s touch reaching for him and threw up his shields. Trowa was confused, and Quatre did not want him mistaking love for another baser emotion. After all deep down Trowa didn’t trust him, despite his words to the contrary. There was that nagging question and until Trowa decided one way or the other what it was he wanted and needed, Quatre would maintain his separation. No matter how much it was killing him inside. Because there was no doubt with Quatre where Trowa was concerned. He loved him more than he probably should, and it took everything he had to run away from those arms he so desperately wanted to be held by and sheltered in.

He found the music room and ran inside to collapse on the couch within, his sobs heaving in his chest as he buried his face in the dusty cushions. A soft clearing of a throat at the door startled him and he sat up sniffing to see Sally standing there, Lantern in one hand and a large thermos in the other. “No one should be alone on a night like this.” She said walking in and moving to sit next to Quatre. It didn’t take much urging for Quatre to turn into those welcoming arms and weep his sorrow upon her breast. Her hand softly combing his hair and stroking his back in comfort “I won’t ask what happened, I can guess. However I think you are both making a mistake.” Sally said lifting Quatre’s chin and drying his eyes with her sleeve. “Problems won’t go away if you don’t work them out.” She said and Quatre sniffed.

“The problem is me.” Quatre said his head hanging in dejection.

“No, the problem is both of you. You’re both strong willed men, and there are going to be times when you don’t see eye to eye. Believe me I know. Clashing of wills is something I deal with everyday.” She said smiling and Quatre smiled through his tears weakly. “Oh sure laugh it up.” Sally teased pushing Quatre’s nose before turning to the thermos and pouring out it’s contents into a cup. “Here have some cocoa. I love this stuff when I’m upset.” She said with a wink before handing Quatre the mug.

“What’s cocoa?” He asked sniffing the contents.

“It’s made from a plant that grows here. I’ll not bore you with how we make the powder to brew, just trust me and drink it.” Sally said and Quatre took a sip and his eyes lit up. And he licked his lips of the froth as he lowered his mug. Sally grinned. “See, told you.” She said and Quatre smiled back.

“Oh this is wonderful, you’d better be careful, I could become addicted to this cocoa or whatever you call it.” Quatre

said taking another sip.

“And you wouldn’t be the first to become addicted either. If I could I’d have a never-ending supply on me at all times. Wait till I show you what else we make from this plant, chocolate.” She said digging in her pockets and laying small wrapped bundles on the low table in front of them. “I figured if we were going to have a good old fashioned night owl chat session, we should do it properly. Nothing better than a good friend a warm fire and enough chocolate to make a glutton out of yourself.” Sally said moving over to the fireplace. “All we lack is the fire and I left Wufei behind damn it.” Sally said her hands on her hips.

Quatre smiled. “I think I can manage a small spark.” He said moving to place some old dry wood into the hearth then sparking some kindling in the lantern and tossing it into the fireplace. Soon the warm glow encompassed the room. “There no magic required.” He said with a wink before moving to sit with Sally on the floor by the fire. Wrapped in blankets, drinking cocoa and eating the chocolate blocks Sally had brought they related to each other for the first time their respective pasts.

Quatre learned about Sally’s youth here, and how when she was around 6 years old the Oz’rialites had ceased just making random raids and had outright attacked the planet. They had dropped devices onto three of the largest clusters of dwellings; the tree cities were vast, nothing like the small one they were in now. Thousands of people had been taken by surprise and in a bright flash of light the cities went up in flames. All had perished. Those left in the smaller dwellings were all rounded up as they were caught in the wave of shock and sold into slavery. Families separated, the children taken from parents, husbands from wives, everyone was torn apart. Sally had never seen her parents or her three siblings again after that day. What was worse it had been so long it was unlikely she would ever see them again. The cities still burned. Not with flames, but with a warping energy. Whatever the Oz’rialites had used to destroy them had shaken the very foundations of the planet’s eco system and shattered the lives of millions of people.

Sally learned how Quatre grew up. He had been so young when he’d been captured, he couldn’t remember a time before he was a slave. The only person in his life had been his much older sister Iria, who had clung to him protectively for years. He was around five years old when his powers first began to manifest themselves, and the stress had almost killed him. Iria had risked discovery to help shield him from the onslaught of power. And her risk failed. Her powers had been discovered when Quatre had taken a nasty blow from a keeper and had broken his arm. Iria had moved to heal it, and Quatre had watched in horror as they savagely raped then murdered his beloved sister. Calling her the foulest names in the process, it was an image he would carry with him forever and it still hurt deeply as he sobbed again over her loss.

He had been miserable and he was at his lowest when he had met a boy just as sad and lonely by chance upon a slave freighter. He had been drawn to Trowa; there had been something so strong in that pull, it was like gravity. He had no choice but to follow the pull and there he found a shaggy headed youth not much older than himself. It was near instant affinity. As if Trowa too had just known Quatre was an extension of himself. It was hard to explain in words, but Sally understood all too well how sometimes, when you met the right person, you just instinctively knew they were the one you belonged standing next to.

“I had known it wouldn’t last, I wasn’t so naive to think it would. But it felt so right Sally.” Quatre said curling up on the floor his chin resting on his hands. I never felt so totally centered and at ease as I did when he was there with me holding my hand. I mean I didn’t realize why then of course. There’s only so much a child can comprehend. Then he was just my stability, my friend. It wasn’t until the dreams started when I was about thirteen I figured out I was the way I am, and what I had really felt for Trowa was more than just mere friendship.” He said with a sigh.

“That’s with most humans dear. I met Wufei before he could figure it out too. Girls mature faster than boys, and I have a two year head start on him to boot.” Sally said curling up next to Quatre on the floor. “Pig headed obstinate goat. I have no idea what I see in him. But I just knew the day I met him, he was a part of me. I was thirteen he was eleven and even then he ranted better than anyone I know.” Sally said laughing at the memory. “He has a fabulous temper, very entertaining.” She said giggling.

“So I’ve noticed.” Quatre said smiling at the woman beside him on the floor. “And he’s the one you should be with. Not me here on the cold floor.” Quatre said and Sally rolled over and glared at him playfully.

“I think he can survive a night without me. He’s already done all the damage he can to me anyway.” Sally said smirking and Quatre’s eyes widened.

“Are you telling me you’re...?”

“Up the duff, preggers, bun in the oven, knocked up, whatever you call it, yes.” Sally said with a smirk. “And don’t you dare say anything blondie. I haven’t told him yet.” Said and Quatre laughed.

“Mouth shut. How long have you known?” He asked and Sally smiled.

“The minute it happened, I am a healer Quatre the one thing I do know is human bodies. I’m only a few days gone I have time yet to break the news to him. He’s got other things to worry about at the moment. And I know damn well if I tell him now, I’m never going to get anything done. I do not need Wufei hovering over me at the moment and he needs to be doing what you’re doing. You know how he gets. Smart he is, talented he is, over reacts? Oh yes. Being rational and level headed is not Wufei’s strong point.” Sally said and Quatre smiled.

“Point taken.” Quatre said yawning and grabbing another piece of chocolate. “You must show me how to make this later.” Quatre said, his face a near mask of ecstasy as he chewed and let the brown soft chocolate melt in his mouth then slide down his throat.

“I will if you promise me something.” Sally said and Quatre turned a skeptical eye to her. “You go back and work this out. I think you’ve both calmed down enough sufficiently to talk this out without shouting at each other.” Sally said and Quatre nodded.

“I think you’re right. I over reacted.” Quatre said and Sally nodded.

“Yes, you did. And so did he. You’re both going to say and do things wrong. That’s part of human nature. No one is infallible. But you said yourself he’s a part of you and that makes you a part of him. You two belong together. This is all just a misunderstanding. Now go back and kiss and make up already.” Sally said sitting up and pressing what was left of the chocolate in Quatre’s hands. “And take this, I’m sure you can figure out a creative way to share this treasure with him.” She added with a wink and Quatre blushed, but his smile was positively wicked. “Good boy, now shoo.” Sally said and Quatre gathered his things and headed back to where he had left Trowa. He caught Wufei leaving the dwelling as he approached.

“Sally you are far too devious for your own good. Thank you.” Quatre said softly to the air shaking his head as he walked up to the dwelling. Only to be literally run over by Trowa who appeared to be headed out to find Quatre.

“Quatre!” Trowa cried scooping Quatre into a hard embrace. “I’m sorry, I’m so sorry.” He said and Quatre’s tears began to fall again.

“Don’t be sorry. I’m sorry for running out. I should have stayed.” Quatre wept as Trowa dragged him out of the rain and back inside.

“No, Quatre I started this. I should never have said what I did. I didn’t mean it, I honestly didn’t mean it, I just don’t want to lose you.” Trowa said never relinquishing his hold on the young man in his arms, Trowa’s inner subconscious fear of Quatre making a repeat flight tightening his grip.

“I don’t want to lose you either. I love you Trowa.” Quatre sobbed clinging to Trowa and getting lost in those arms that wrapped around him firmly.

“I love you too Quatre. And it’s because I love you I was so adamant and I was wrong. I was being selfish. I’m sorry.” Trowa said inhaling the scent from Quatre’s hair, that warmth of feeling Quatre brought to him welling up inside like a fire. That soft mental touch that was always there was back and Trowa felt complete. He leaned over and tentatively pressed his lips against Quatre’s. Who pressed his back firmly, parting them in invitation. Trowa’s heart leapt for joy as he accepted the invitation and drank in Quatre’s kiss.

Nothing in life was as sweet as Quatre’s kiss, and this time even more so. As Trowa pulled back for air he licked his lips. “Quatre? What have you been eating?” Trowa asked, the taste sublime.

Quatre giggled. “Close your eyes and open your mouth.” Quatre said and Trowa just gave a cursory raise of his eyebrow before he complied. Quatre slipped a piece of chocolate from it’s bag, and was about to place it in Trowa’s mouth when he had a better idea. Quatre slipped it into his own then leaned in and passed Trowa the chocolate with his tongue. Trowa shivered.

“By the Maker Quatre. Don’t do that unless you want to be severely ravaged right here on the floor.” Trowa said swallowing the confection and opening his eyes to see a very smug young blonde smiling at him.

“I take it you like the peace offering?” Quatre almost purred crawling on all fours towards where Trowa sat near the fire. Trowa’s whole body shivered again.

“I like you more, but yes. What is it?” Trowa asked as he watched Quatre pluck another piece out and place it in his mouth in such a suggestive, wicked way Trowa wasn’t sure this really was Quatre in the room with him. The gleam in Quatre’s eyes was bordering on sinful. Trowa’s body was damn near rigid with anticipation. Quatre sure knew how to seduce someone and was doing a masterful job of it.

“It’s chocolate. Sally made it. Would you like some more?” Quatre asked twirling a piece around Trowa’s mouth. Trowa groaned as Quatre pushed the piece inside and past Trowa’s lips, and pushing his finger in as well up to the knuckle.

Trowa’s resolve cracked like glass. And he sucked on that finger wantonly. Devouring the sweet flavor of chocolate and Quatre. The small whimper from Quatre the only indication that he too was highly agitated.

Trowa opened his eyes and locked his gaze with Quatre’s. Reaching out to push Quatre back. Knocking him off balance and sending him sprawling to the floor. Trowa straddled him quickly and literally ripped open Quatre’s shirt almost violently. “I did warn you about ravishment on the floor. Don’t say I didn’t.” Trowa said and Quatre smiled up at him wickedly.

“Do you hear me complaining? Do shut up and kiss me.” Quatre replied and gave a predatory smile.

“As you wish.” Trowa said burying his lips in the hollow below Quatre’s Adam’s apple. Carrying a trail of kisses down his chest to his nipples. Reaching into the bag himself now Trowa took out a few pieces of chocolate and let the heat of his hands melt it. He smeared it over Quatre’s lips and neck and proceeded to lick it off. Quatre moaned wildly, his hands blindly searching for the bag as Trowa attacked him. His hand finding the source of delights Quatre made sure to take his turn. And he rolled, effectively knocking Trowa over and switching places.

“It’s my turn.” Quatre said and Trowa growled and grunted, tugging at Quatre’s pants while Quatre divested Trowa of his own. The ripping of fabric and popping seams punctuated the moans, and groans as they tore into each other wildly and wantonly. Both of them raging with barely suppressed fire and lust.

Somehow during the tussle with clothes, Quatre ended up back underneath his lover. But hardly noticed as Trowa licked and sucked melted chocolate off his swollen manhood. And from Trowa’s position, Quatre eagerly returned the attentions as both men devoured each other in a frenzy of saliva and chocolate.

They set a frantic rhythm and soon the chocolate was forgotten and a new flavor was sought after in earnest. Their minds interlocked and their emotions intertwined as they telegraphed what they wanted not in words but in feeling. Both giving and taking pleasure in each other's body and wrapping themselves in the love that radiated from deep within.

At the ferocious pace they set it didn't take long for both men to reach the point of no return and almost simultaneously they released. Each savoring the taste that was uniquely their partner's and even the chocolate paled in comparison. Knees almost too weak to move them, they somehow managed to crawl back to bed sated and exhausted, where they wrapped around each other's warmth and let sleep come. Content to forget about a stupid misunderstanding and work out their problems together. They were bound to disagree from time to time and say things they didn't mean, it was all part of being together. Every couple had fights; it was only natural that they would too. And nothing was as wonderful as making up again and lifting their love higher than the turbulence that rocked it for a moment.

It only made the love they shared that much stronger. Tomorrow they would go back to work on solid footing and while Trowa didn't like what Quatre needed to do, he knew Quatre had to do it. But that didn't mean he couldn't be there by his side protecting him while he worked.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Thirty

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Everyone heaved a sigh of relief when Trowa and Quatre walked into the communal room together hand in hand and seemingly better off after having their spat than worse for the wear.

“I see you two kissed and made up.” Duo commented a happy grin on his face.

“We made up, whether we kissed or not is none of your business.” Trowa replied and Duo laughed.

“Hate to break this to you, but Mr. I’m all quiet all the time, except when I’m having sex. We all heard you.” Duo parried right back and Quatre looked about ready to crawl under the nearest rug. Trowa as usual, looked unaffected. But he did turn a questioning look to Quatre who sheepishly nodded. Apparently Trowa had never realized how vocal he became during sex. He’d amend that later, if he could. Considering he had no idea he was doing it in the first place, that might make it difficult.

“Sorry.” Trowa said sitting down on the rug.

“Oh lord Trowa don’t be. You’re a wonderful mood setter.” Sally smirked plopping a bowl in his hands.

“Sally! I swear woman do you have to share all our private details with everyone?” Wufei growled and as always Sally laughed at him.

“Oh you’re just a prude. Who’s idea was it to provide the chocolate to them? Like you didn’t know damn well they’d have fun with it.” Sally said tugging his ponytail as she passed to fill a bowl for Quatre and serve him breakfast. Wufei choked.

“Thank you Wufei.” Trowa said and smiled. Wufei’s edge eased slightly.

"You're welcome." He snorted but the gruff act was losing its effectiveness against them. They all knew deep down and beneath all the bravado, Wufei was just as tenderhearted as the rest of them. Even if it galled him to admit it and would probably never admit it out loud.

"Um, excuse me. What's this chocolate aphrodisiac stuff, and who do I have to blow to get my hands on some?" Duo asked and Quatre sputtered and choked on his gruel mid bite. Trowa patting his back while his lover hacked and coughed foodstuff up and out of his lungs.

Sally however was bent over with laughter. She adored Duo's crude and tasteless sense of humor. Heero looked like he was about to strangle his lover with his own braid. "I'll get you some" Sally said with a wink." Duo grinned.

"Love you Sal. You're so good to me." Duo chirruped and then grinned with evil intent at Heero. Who glared right back with a look of "bring it on and we'll see who gets who wild boy" in his eyes.

Zechs and Noin chose that moment to make their presence known and wandered sleepily into the communal room. "Morning everyone." Noin said through a yawn as she poured herself and Zechs some tea from the pot near the fire.

"Good Morning!" Quatre cheerily replied as he went to pour himself some tea and poured some into a second cup for Trowa.

"My, my aren't you the cheery one this morning." Noin said playfully ruffling golden locks. "You need a hair cut." She added as Quatre blew his bangs out his eyes.

"No he doesn't." Trowa said with a look on his face that dared Noin to argue. He liked the shaggy, tousled look on his lover. He especially liked the way it looked immediately after they awoke in the morning with it splayed over pillows. Nope, no one was touching Quatre's hair. He now knew at least partially how Heero felt. But he had to admit he didn't want Quatre's hair quite that long. He was already rather effeminate looking to begin with; if his hair were long it would be difficult to distinguish if Quatre were male or female. And Trowa was decidedly firm in his belief that he liked Quatre MALE, and at least semi looking like one without having to parade his lover around naked to prove it. Duo at least there was no doubt on first glance there was a man underneath all that hair.

::"Well I can always create the illusion for you in private if you like.":: Quatre's voice sang in Trowa's mind and his groin twitched.

::"GET OUT OF MY HEAD PICK POCKET!":: Trowa growled and Quatre smiled into his cup. No one the wiser to their little exchange.

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Everyone was settled and Trowa began the process once more to bring them all into the elemental plane. All were inside and Quatre was waiting for his cue to join them when he suddenly remembered Sally and he opened an eye and looked at her. "Sally, if you see me doing another transfer, do not lend me aide like you did yesterday. Promise me." He said and Sally cocked her head.

"Why not? I was only..." Sally began and Quatre violently shook his head.

"I know, and I appreciate it. But it's not safe for you, or rather your baby. You were lucky yesterday and none of the spirits were vindictive. But there might be one today that is, and possession is something that may happen. I can deal with it and purge myself of the entity if it happens. But your baby is a prime target and you'd have no idea until it was too late. Promise me you will not touch me at all during this. You can help the others, but not me. Promise me." Quatre pleaded and Sally nodded.

"Okay, I promise. I don't like it, but I trust your judgment. I'm sorry." She said and Quatre smiled.

"Don't be sorry. Never be sorry for a blessing Sally." Quatre said and shut his eyes. "I'm going in now. Remember your promise." Quatre said as his breathing slowed and he fell into the same trance as the others as his spirit fled his body and joined his fellows there in the realm of spirits.

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Pitch black and swirling gray clouds engulfed her as she wandered aimlessly. In one moment she had been engulfed with flames and as she prepared herself for the fire, instead of heat, a bitter cold had devoured her. Now Hilde was lost in this frigid void with only her anger to sustain her sanity. Dorothy would pay, if she dare lay a finger on Relena she would rip that bitch's eyebrows right off her smug face. She'd kick that witch's ass with her bare hands from here until next week the minute she figured out how the hell to get out of this place. Wherever this place was. She couldn't see a damn thing, not even her own hand in front of her face. But she heard things, Voices weeping in pain, and in agony. She felt icy fingers grasp at her from the darkness then recoil from her. Hilde should have been scared out of her wits, but surprisingly she wasn't, she was just highly pissed off about the whole mess in general.

She walked for what seemed like days or was it minutes? Time had suddenly seemed to vanish completely and just when she began to doubt she's ever find a way out, a light shimmered far in the distance. It was a golden searchlight reaching out of the void towards her and beckoning to her with a bright and warm promise of hope. So she ran to it, ran as fast as she could.

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It didn't take long for them to reach the second city barricade. And Trowa swallowed his first urge to protest like a lump. This was not about what he wanted, or what Quatre wanted. But what needed to be done. "Don't worry Trowa, I'll be alright." Quatre said laying a hand to Trowa's cheek.

"I cannot do anything but worry. It's pointless to ask me otherwise. But I am going with you. I can at least ward off wraiths that are not human." Trowa said and Quatre nodded.

"Very well." Quatre said turning to the others. "I will need your strength, may I have it?" He asked and Duo looked at Quatre as if that was perhaps the dumbest thing he had ever uttered.

"What the fuck do you think we're here for, a view of the scenery?" Duo asked and Quatre smiled.

"Thank you." Quatre said turning to the edge of the dome shield.

"Anytime Q-man. Just come back in one piece." Duo said with a wink as they settled down in a huddle to channel their energy into one pool from which Quatre could drink from when he needed to bolster his stores.

Trowa watched as the light that was Quatre soared above. The sight was beyond anything Trowa could even begin to describe. Beautiful was not powerful enough; he was in awe of the radiance. He watched as Quatre hovered, his arms outstretched in welcome. Then Quatre opened his mouth and sang that wordless melody once more. Even Trowa felt inexplicably drawn to the call, as if he wanted rush into those arms and into the heavenly embrace that offered dreams and peace eternal.

Trowa shook his head, he had a job to do and he could not be trapped within the power of Quatre's call. Inside the dome he had felt Quatre's song, being outside the shield's buffering protection he was getting trapped by it and he had to focus. There in his peripheral vision he saw the first of the mist wraiths heading toward the power that Quatre emanated and Trowa drew the kukri knife from his belt and held his weapon ready. This knife was not designed to cut flesh, it was Trowa's creation to capture and render the foul mist mutations that were born from festering chaos. Elemental spirits that thrived on creating decay and consumed power like a sponge did water. His spiritual blade absorbed them and dissipated them as he slashed. Freeing the elements within the wraith's form and sending them back to where they belonged.

More Wraiths came, and Trowa howled a battle cry as he spun like a tornado. Cutting down those who sought to absorb his beloved. All the while the spirits that were trapped fled the darkness into Quatre's light. Quatre shook as the spirits slammed into him and through him. They used him as the doorway to salvation and Quatre drank heavily from the pool of power his friends provided him. So many, so many people, so much sorrow and pain. Quatre was lost in the

sea of emotions that passed through him.

Sally watched as once again the ghosts began to step from Quatre's body on the floor. The sight was unbearably eerie, and his pallid and strained features needed power, he wasn't getting enough. There were so many, it was too much, he wasn't going to make it. He sobbed; his face was contorted with pain and sorrow as he wept.

"He needs my help!" Sally cried, her healing instincts screaming at her to embrace him and lend him her strength.

"Sally don't! You promised him. Have faith in him." Zechs said as Sally stepped forward and his hand on her wrist restrained her.

"He's dying!" Sally sobbed and Zechs shook his head.

"Then don't let his death be in vain. Do not break your promise to him. I however have faith in his abilities. Quatre is too stubborn to die so easily." Zechs said but held firm to Sally as they watched the dance of spectral entities pass from one plane to the next through the young mage struggling to keep control on the floor.

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Trowa was frantic in his fight. So many, he had never seen so many wraiths before. Never more than two or three at once, but then again he had never been on a planet so torn asunder before either. It was a breeding ground for wraiths and they were swarming everywhere. He was losing ground and his blade hummed in his hand, as it was quickly being used and dulled. Quatre's glow was flickering and he was violently thrashing as spirits slammed into him in their exodus. Trowa's heart wailed in pain. Quatre was dying! Trowa fought with more purpose and vigor. Screaming his rage as he drove back the wraiths. "You will not have him! I am the master here! Back! All of you back!" He howled and the mists swirled like a vortex echoing Trowa's emotions.

But more wraiths came and more behind them. These were the real enemies they needed to face. These wraiths were the ones destroying the planet. The Oz'rialites in their careless bid for supremacy had unleashed an ecological disaster on the planet. They had begun a chain reaction that made it possible for the elements to buckle and give life to these spiritual abominations that leached all life until it ceased to exist. Their endeavors here were for naught, there was no way to stop this, even if they reached the core of the problem, there was just too much damage, too many wraiths breeding more in their wake. Soon they would devour everything, and bring about their own demise in doing so. Mindless spirits with only one all encompassing purpose, destroy.

The wraiths' job was nearly done all this work they were doing could not bring this planet back from the brink. It was impossible. Yet Trowa knew Quatre would never give up, not until the last city barricade fell and the human spirits trapped within this hell could be free. Trowa wept as he fought. Quatre would sell his soul to help a stranger, and damn it all Trowa would be right there by his side to buy it back again. They were all fools, and the only good thing to come

out of this whole damn experience was that they now meshed as a team. Trowa could feel Wufei, Duo, and Heero all draining themselves to exhaustion to aide Quatre. He felt Quatre and his love for life wash over everything around them. He felt himself mingle with the others in a tapestry of power that vibrated like the strings of a harp as Quatre strummed the notes and led them together as one.

Then he felt a string snap, and he looked up and caught a glimpse that made his blood run cold with terror. The wraiths were everywhere and tearing into Quatre's wings.

"NOOOOOOOOO!" Trowa sobbed still swinging his blade, as it grew ever heavier in his grip. He couldn't get close enough. He watched the last trapped soul flee through Quatre then Quatre turn to wrestle free of the wraith's that began to shred him. But he was so weak and had nothing but his hands to try and work free of the mists that began to encase him.

Then from out of nowhere something else appeared out of the mists. A winged horse-like apparition came soaring from out of the mists; the wraiths recoiled from the presence as if burned. Trowa heaved as he tried to focus on his battle and the new presence in the void. He blinked as he noticed the new spirit only had the body of a horse from the waist down. The rest was a raven-haired woman, who looked like... Hilde?

The centaur's wings swooped downward and arms reached out to grasp a limp Quatre to a tender breast. She radiated the same golden light Quatre did, but where the wraiths had seemed drawn to Quatre, they fled from Hilde. Trowa's eyes widened as she landed and reared on her hind hooves still cradling Quatre in her arms. "Oh for God's sake FUCK OFF!" She hissed kicking one of the wraiths with her front hooves. Where it dissipated instantly. Hilde was like Trowa's blade. She was a purifying force, a cleansing elemental. Where Trowa was a wielder of the power, Hilde was one that absorbed and as the power went through her, it came back out cleansed and purified. No wonder the wraiths fled from her. She was like them only the reverse and she would devour them instead.

But what the hell was she doing here?

"Am I glad to see you two! I've been wandering around here forever!" Hilde said trotting over to Trowa and handing him Quatre. "But tell me what's going on in a minute. I think he's hurt." Hilde said and Trowa nodded leading her back towards the dome shield and protection for the time being.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Thirty~One

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Heero, Duo, and Wufei stood jaws agape as a third signature entered the dome with Trowa, who held a battered Avatar in his arms.

“Holy shit. Hilde?” Duo asked looking at the centaur in confusion.

“Yes, and don’t ask how I got here. I have no clue. One minute I was gonna bash that Dorothy bitch’s head in, the next I was here.” Hilde said turning to look at Quatre as Trowa laid him down.

“Is he alright?” She asked and Trowa nodded.

“Yes, just drained. The wraiths managed to get a little of his energy, but not enough where he’ll suffer from it long. Thank the maker.” Trowa said stroking blonde tendrils. Quatre’s eyes chose that moment to flutter open.

“Welcome back cutie pie.” Hilde chirruped and Quatre smiled.

“I thought that was you. Thank you.” He said sitting up slowly leaning on Trowa as he did so.

“The one and only. Can you tell me how I got here?” She asked and Quatre shook his head.

“Not at the moment no. I’m too tired. When did you get to MO II?” he asked and Hilde looked confused.

“Is that where I am? The last thing I knew I was in my sitting room with Lena. Then that bitch witch showed up. Then I was here.” Hilde said and Quatre looked terrified.

“Your body is not linked with ours on the outside?” Quatre asked looking worried then looking at Duo. “Duo are you thinking what I am?” He asked and Duo nodded.

“Hilde, what happened just before you woke up here?” Quatre asked and Hilde sighed,

“I was by the fire, poker in hand ready to clobber the cunt. Then there was fire, then I was here.” Hilde said and Duo flopped down and Quatre cried. Wufei looked crestfallen and Trowa and Heero just looked confused.

“What? Tell me!” Hilde said and Quatre looked up through his tears.

“You’re dead. Or at least your body is, it’s hard to explain. But a human body cannot survive in this plain. What Dorothy did is just abominable. Any mage knows you can only travel to this dimension spiritually. She sent you here BODILY. You ceased to be the moment you crossed over.” Quatre said weeping. “I’m so sorry Hilde.” He said leaning over and throwing his arms around her.

“I’m dead?” She asked stunned and Quatre sobbed in her neck nodding. “I sure as hell don’t feel dead.” She said and Duo sighed.

“Cause the hag didn’t realize you had mage potential. Those without gifts just become mindless ghosts here. You retained the essence of who you are. It’s complicated.” Duo said rubbing tired eyes, fighting not to cry. He really had liked the girl, and it was horrible to know she was trapped here.

“I’m not a mage.” Hilde said and Wufei pursed his lips.

“You are, well, you have the potential to be. It might have just been dormant in your body until it surfaced to protect you on instinct. Whatever the case, you have it, and you are now here.” Wufei said sighing.

“How do I get out of here?” She asked and Quatre pulled her tighter still crying on her shoulder.

"You don't." He whispered and Hilde ripped away from him.

"Like Hell I don't. Relena's in trouble!" She spat and Trowa reached over to calm her down.

"Then we'll go and help her. But Hilde you are dead, you can't cross back out of here without a body to go back to." Trowa said and Hilde's eyes burned.

"Then find me a God Damn Body!" Hilde hissed and Quatre sniffed but sat bolt upright.

"Share mine." He said and Trowa's jaw dropped.

"No, you're drained you can't handle a possession right now." Trowa said leveling a glare.

"We can't leave her here!" Quatre countered when Duo stood.

"Trowa's right Quatre. You're weak. She can share my body till we can figure out a way to get her one of her own again. I'm fine, I can house her spirit till we can do more." Duo said and Quatre smiled.

"Wait a minute. What do you mean share?" Hilde asked and Duo grinned.

"Just what you think it means. Come possess me baby. But don't think you're gonna get to boss me around." Duo said and it was Hilde's turn to look stunned.

"You mean I'm going to be aware, and living in your body, with you?" Hilde asked and Duo nodded.

"Basically, yes." He said and Hilde just shook her head in wonder.

"I have no idea what's going on here. But I suppose I have to trust you." Hilde said and Quatre took her hand.

“Just like we trust you. Possession is not something we really want to do. But it’s necessary until we can find a solution to this problem. And if Duo gets too tired to sustain control, I’ll take you for a while, and Wufei can too.” Quatre said and Hilde snorted.

“Why do I feel like a virus all of a sudden?” She asked and Duo smiled.

“Hildeitusdykeorrhea, easy to contract, hard to get rid of.” He teased and she glared at him.

“You are an asshole you know that?” She said and she smiled brighter.

“Why thank you, yes I am. Now come here and let’s get this over with and get out of here. We need to tell Zechs that we have trouble and we need to stop Dorothy.” Duo said going over and wrapping his arms around Hilde’s torso. “Now, just don’t do anything, I’ll take care of this, you’ll feel like you’re being absorbed, don’t fight it, you’re supposed to feel like that.” He said and Hilde nodded.

The group watched as Duo and Hilde’s mage signatures merged. One form melting into the other, the images blurring then vanishing as Duo took Hilde into his body with him. The other’s followed quickly, but not before Heero turned to Wufei to ask a personal yet pertinent question.

“She’s going to be totally aware, but inside Duo?” He asked and Wufei nodded.

“Yes, and before you ask, yes even during sex.” Wufei said knowing that was what was on Heero’s mind.

“Great, just wonderful.” Heero said irritated as he allowed Wufei to push him back into his own body.

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Catherine watched as Mariemaia played in the brook. It was quite peaceful here deep in the forest. The Ruins of the Sank Empire were tragic to behold, but here in the Queen’s hunting cottage, tucked away from everything one could forget just why they were there in the first place. The wind played with auburn locks and the birds sang in harmony with the sounds the forest made. In some sort of twisted way it was like an odd little family scene. Abdul was there splashing around in the stream like an idiot, Mari was cavorting and laughing with him, and Catherine just sat there trying to make heads or tails out of it all.

Even though this place seemed idyllic, something felt sorely out of place, she just couldn't put her finger on it. Something was wrong, but what? She'd gotten vague feelings like this in the past and they always turned out to be warnings to something bigger.

The first time she felt one, was a few days before her parents had sold them into slavery. She had feared for days that she was never going to see her little brother again. She had turned out to be right. She hadn't seen him for fifteen years after that day. The next time she felt one this strong was just before Dorothy had taken her to the desert moon. Catherine had just known something good was going to happen. And it had, she'd found Trowa and had been blessed with Abdul.

This feeling however was bad, and she didn't like it. Someone was hurting, someone was dead, and something big was coming.

But that's all she had, she only had feelings, vague premonitions to guide her hand, nothing tangible. She just had to warn Abdul to keep his eyes and ears open just in case.

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Heero sat staring at his lover, it was just wrong. Duo didn't look right this way; he had BROWN hair, not black. And his eyes were VIOLET, not that cornflower blue. "Get used to it Heero, I'm two people in one body, these are residual traces of Hilde. She's not been dead long." Duo said then spoke again. "You think you're freaked out? I don't want to think what going to the bathroom is going to be like!"

"So shut your eyes. I really don't want you looking at my dick either."

"I can't shut my eyes moron they are your eyes."

"So cope."

"This sucks."

"Tell me about"

Heero's head spun. Two distinct people, one voice bantering back and forth. It was just unnerving. How was he supposed to go to bed with Duo? The sex aside, just sleeping. Would Hilde be aware then too?

He just wanted to scream. How the hell did he get mixed up in this mess? He had no idea. It hurt to think at the moment.

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Dorothy looked at the limp figure lying on the floor. She'd passed out and Dorothy was still no closer at learning the location of the mages. The princess was harder than she looked. She had a firm will and resolve that Dorothy was beginning to despise. She'd find a way to break her and get her to talk, the princess WOULD crack eventually, and all of them did in the end.

Even her Grandfather would in the end. Let him play her for a fool? She thought not. Once this matter was sorted and the control all in the hands of the Romerfeller faction, Dermal's usefulness would also be at an end. The powerless idiot, did he really believe their blood connection insured her loyalty to him?

If he did, he deserved to be replaced. And replace him she would when the time was right. Dorothy's ambition knew no limits as she slowly climbed the latter of power.

The weak she would crush on her way to the top, there was no place for the weak. No place for nobles with frivolous ideas of peace and charity.

Wars defined races, showed how the strong prevailed and conquered. Life without war was life without purpose. She'd make sure she had a front row seat. Placing her generals in strategic positions, and using her powers to make the Oz'rialite Empire more than just the ruling nation, she'd make them all Gods!

Fear was a mighty weapon, and Dorothy thrived on other's fear. She drank it in like a drug and it bolstered her powers. Relena's fear was delicious, Dorothy felt heady and near drunk on it as she fell into the Princess's bed to sleep.

The Princess would feed her again later, for now she was sated and ready for slumber. So she curled up under the covers and smiled as she drifted off to sleep. Dreaming of the moment she would take that blonde human maggot by the throat and make him watch as she killed his friends, destroyed his homeland, and then just before killing him, draining him of his power. No, a better idea, perhaps taking him before he died. He was rather a nice looking human, and she couldn't ignore the fact he was dripping with power. If she took him, and if she conceived, the child would be unstoppable. She could mold it into a leader that could carry on after her.

Yes, that was a good plan. That would be what she would do. She was smug with satisfaction as sleep took her and she dreamed of the screaming young man beneath her in the throws of passion, and sick with himself just before he came and just before she ran him through with her blade.

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Quatre sat up in a cold sweat clutching his heart and crying out.

“Quatre! What’s wrong?” Trowa asked pulling a shivering lover into his arms.

“I just had the worst dream I have ever had.” He said shuddering and leaning into Trowa’s warm embrace.

“What did you dream?” Trowa asked and Quatre looked up into those reassuring eyes.

“That Dorothy killed all of you, then she tied me down, rap.... Then she killed me.” He said skipping over the rape part.

Trowa however knew what Quatre had refrained from saying and just held him closer.

“There’s more. Quatre said sighing. My son, She bore my son, and he was horrible.” Quatre added shuddering.

“And not going to happen. It was just a dream.” Trowa said kissing his lovers brow and pulling him back down to sleep.

Quatre tried to seek comfort in those arms, but he was cold, frigid with terror and dread. It had felt so real. He prayed Trowa was right and it was only a dream.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Thirty~Two

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I'm here for your love and I'll make my stand. We we're born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Duo awoke early and cursed. “Damn it, Hilde! Who said you could be an early riser?” He said noting that the room was still shrouded with the darkness before dawn.

“Who said you could dally in bed all day? You have work to do.” She chastised back, Heero pulled the pillow over his head.

“It's bad enough I have to listen to him prattle on and on, Must I listen to two jabber mouths, in one voice? If you two are going to argue, get out!” Heero groaned and Duo spooned up behind his lover.

“I'm sorry Heero. Shall I kiss it and make it better?” Duo said seductively.

“You most certainly will NOT! “

“Shut up Hilde”

“No, I am not going to play peeping Tom while you two fuck like rabbits.”

“Consider it your rent for using my body.”

“I'll make it limp!”

“You'd better not!”

“STOP IT!” Heero screamed leaping from the bed, his pillow in hand. “Duo, I love you, but this is driving me insane! Until you two can sort out this time-share thing you’ve got going on. I’m sleeping in the common room,” He said stepping out the door and bolting for sanity’s sake to the communal room.

“Bitch, you’ll pay for this.”

“Sorry Duo. I really am.” Hilde said and Duo sighed. He could feel her inner turmoil she meant it. It was impossible to stay mad at her now.

“Yeah, whatever. I guess it would be kind of awkward for ya huh?” Duo said and his own head nodded. “Well since we’re up, I’m hungry, so I know you are.” Duo said and he was up on his feet before he’d even made a move to do it himself.

“You have a good nose Duo, I can already smell food. How fast can these feet of yours move?” Hilde asked and Duo smirked.

“Fast enough!” He said grabbing his shirt and pulling it on over his head as he followed his nose to the source of the food.

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Breakfast was eaten in a hurry; everyone pitched in together to make one last meal. The morning for the first time since they’d been on MOII had broken with a blue sky and sunshine. “Whatever you did yesterday made a huge difference. This is the MOII I remember.” Sally said full of smiles for everyone.

“I didn’t think we did so much, but I was exhausted yesterday. I can feel a difference this morning. The whole place seems to be pulling itself back together.” Trowa said still rubbing sleep out of his eyes. “It’s stable again, that is what’s important. It’s not on the road to healing, but the deterioration has stopped. We can afford a pause now. I think we need turn our attention to our newest crisis first. Then once all is right, or at least as right as it can be, we can return here and finish what we started.” He added and turned to Quatre who nodded solemnly. His dream still plagued him and something felt extremely wrong.

“I spoke to the Fireflies they are grateful and are more than willing to wait for our return. They aren’t dying anymore either. So at least we did some good here.” Quatre said with a sigh. Not looking at all like his normal cheery self. Sally pursed her lips.

“Alright, spill it bright eyes. What’s wrong?” She asked shoving a mug of tea under his nose.

“Bad dream.” He said taking a sip to avoid saying more.

“Bullshit. Talk.” Sally said folding her arms across her chest.

“We need to stick together. Whatever we do, we cannot be separated. I have a bad feeling we’re walking into a trap. Whatever you do, don’t underestimate Dorothy Catalonia.” Quatre said barely above a whisper.

“That bitch is going to have my foot shoved so far up her ass she’ll be able to clip my toenails with her teeth!” Came Duo’s irritated voice.

“Was that Hilde or Duo talking?” Sally asked cocking an eyebrow.

“Both!” Came the forceful answer. Death’s eyes danced wickedly. Duo’s fire sparkled in Hilde’s shade of blue. Everyone gave an involuntary shudder Duo in these moments was eerie enough on his own. Adding Hilde to the mix, who was fueled by love and passion, and it was frightening.

“You’ll only have her ass if I do not get to her first.” Zechs growled shoving his breakfast away having lost his appetite.

“That’s just it! Listen to yourselves! We go in TOGETHER, we leave together!” Quatre said slamming his fists down on the table making the dishes clatter to the floor. His outburst shocking everyone into silence, Quatre was never this forceful, and never lost his control like this. He was visibly shaking. “If we do not face her as a unit, we will not win. I’ve seen it!” Quatre said lowering his gaze as tears of shame began cascading down his cheeks. Trowa reached out to clasp Quatre’s hand.

“I thought it was just a dream.” Trowa said softly and Quatre shook his head.

“No, I’m certain it was a vision. I remember too much, too clearly. It can’t be anything else. It’s a warning.” Quatre said his knees shaking as he gripped the table to keep from falling. He looked up and his eyes were pleading with his friends more than his words could hope to convey. “Please promise me we will stick close to one another. Where we go from here our lives will depend on it. Promise me!” Quatre begged and Wufei stood and bowed deeply.

“On my honor I will not stray from our group, no matter what the reason.” He said taking Sally’s hand as he straightened.

“Make that We.” Sally said kissing Wufei’s cheek proudly. Quatre looked sternly at Sally and she narrowed her eyes and shook her head.

“Tell him.” Quatre said and Sally looked furious, until she saw the urgency in Quatre’s eyes.

“Tell me what?” Wufei asked trying to figure out the silent conversation going on between his friend and his mate.

“Wufei, this we I meant. It’s more than just you and I.” Sally began and Wufei looked confused.

Sally rolled her eyes. Being subtle was not going to cut it; she’d have to be blunt. “Wufei, I’m pregnant.” Sally said and Duo’s bowl clattered to the floor and he began to choke. Not from Sally’s declaration, he’d known that just by looking at her. Being able to see and manipulate life forces was what his gifts were based on, and she’d had an extra one floating around her for a good three weeks.

Rather, Duo was trying not to choke from laughter at Wufei’s stunned expression. His eyes were wide, and his mouth was just kind of hanging there wide open. Duo however was mentally counting down.

Ten, nine, eight, seven, six...

\*\*Sputter\*\*

Five, four, three...

“Sputter, Twitch\*\*

Two... One!

“SALLY! How long have you known this!? Why didn't you tell me!? Are you mad!? Running around like this like a pack mule when you are having a baby? MY BABY! Oh my, are you okay? Do you need anything? Stupid Foolish woman, being so close to wild mage energy you know better! What if one of those spirits had passed through you? Did they? Do you know? Are you Sure you're all right? Is the baby okay? I'm going to be a father?....”

“WUFEI!!!!!!” The entire room shouted as one just to silence the rambling man now pacing the floor, waving his hands like a lunatic, in between shouting at Sally and asking her if she needed anything.

“And he wonders why I waited to tell him?” Sally said sarcastically rolling her eyes and shoving Wufei into a chair.

“But, but...” Wufei stammered searching for words as he looked up into soft blue eyes. He reached out and just pulled her into his arms. Tears came unbidden to his eyes, he had never wept so openly before, but he couldn't help it. His whole world was upside down. He'd made a promise to Quatre, but now things were different. The stakes for him were different. Sally was his world, and within her was something Wufei already unconditionally loved. Be it a boy or a girl, it was his child and no promise in the world would keep him from keeping it safe. His honor was warring with his heart.

He felt a gentle hand fall to his shoulder and he could not look into Quatre's eyes.

“I understand Wufei, I do. That's why Sally needed to tell you now. Do not make this promise lightly. But know I ask you to make it, because I have seen what will happen if you do not. It is for your life, for Sally's and your baby's. All of you will perish if you leave the safety of our group. Even if you think leaving is helping them, it isn't. Don't trust an Illusion, trust us, and trust me.” Quatre said and Wufei nodded clutching Sally to him. He'd believe in Quatre, he had to, everything he held dear was the price he would pay if he didn't.

“What did you see Quatre?” Noin asked her voice filled with mixed emotions, not sure if she really wanted to know.

Quatre shuddered and swallowed. “I will spare you the visions. They are not pleasant. Just believe me when I say death is welcomed when it comes.” Quatre said his voice filled with pain.

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Treize stood in a darkened alley, his black cloak pulled tightly around his frame as he scuttled from shadow to shadow. He'd received the coded message a few hours earlier, and was going to meet Zechs' shuttlecraft and escort the “Cargo” to safety.

To say he was worried was an understatement. He'd not heard from the Princess Relena since she'd contacted him

about his daughter. And he had been unsuccessful in finding her in his own attempts to contact her. Demail was breathing viciously down his neck making every movement he made next to impossible. And he knew absolutely nothing concerning the whereabouts of Dorothy Catalonia and that alone had him petrified.

In his search, he uncovered some horrific rumors. And he had read things concerning Demail's grand-daughter that made Treize's blood not just run cold, but freeze in his veins. Torture, disappearances, decapitations, blood rites, and a host of other demonic rumors ran wherever her name was mentioned.

Treize had learned the true meaning of fear, and he feared her and what it was rumored she could do. He had never expected an opponent such as her. When it had been Demail and the Senators that followed him Treize held hope of succeeding. Now hope was a precious commodity he was in sore need of, things looked remarkably black on the horizon.

Treize rounded the corner and saw Peacemillion dock in one of the stockyard shipping bays and he hurried to meet it. He reached it as Zechs and Noin began unloading large crates onto hover pallets. "Pleasant return to you Zechs. I take it my shipment of Tarvarian Brandy is as expected?" Treize asked, knowing full well there were eyes and ears watching his every move.

"It is your Lordship. I inspected all the cases myself. You'll have more than enough to host the entire Senate at a dinner party." Zechs returned light heartedly, trying to look as innocuous as possible. All the while shaking in his boots.

"I may be generous, but not that generous. Selected gifts, the rest is mine to horde." Treize said forcing laughter.

"Will they just hurry up!" Duo hissed where he was scrunched into a ball beside Heero in one of the crates.

"Shut up Baka." Heero whispered back glaring at his lover. Doing little good since they were immersed in darkness.

"I agree with Heero. Shut up." Hilde said and Duo frowned.

"Don't you start now Hilde." Duo snapped back and tried to shift. "Jesus Heero-knobby-knees, get your bony joints out of my ass." Duo whined and Heero tugged his braid and clamped his hand over Duo's mouth.

"Shut up or I'll shove something else up that ass. Like my fucking sword!" Heero growled.

Silence descended once more.

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It seemed like hours before five men, one woman, and one ghost sharing a body, managed to stretch cramped joints and crawl out of the crates they had been smuggled to planet surface in.

Trowa looked the worse for the wear as he lay prone on the floor face down. Quatre literally pounding cramped back muscles with his small fists.

“See, sometimes growing up so tall isn’t such a benefit.” Quatre teased leaning over to kiss Trowa’s neck.

“Kiss later, hit me... hard.” Trowa groaned as Quatre proceeded to pummel Trowa’s back and shoulders.

Wufei was off in another corner of the room fussing over Sally who looked about two seconds away from clocking him in the chin with her fist.

Duo just lay groaning on the floor, having a fairly tall frame himself, he wasn’t fairing much better than Trowa in the cramp department. It took little prodding from Heero to turn him over and begin walking on Duo’s back.

“Ah, god, Unnnnn, Oh Yes. Oh Heero that’s, sooooo good.” Duo moaned as several audible cracks could be heard.

“I whole heartedly agree. Step on his butt Heero!” Hilde called out also lost in the wonderful barefoot massage she was sharing with Duo.

“I like how you think lady.” Duo groaned as Heero’s feet trampled the cramps away.

“I like how he moves.” Hilde purred back.

“Both of you shut up or this stops.” Heero said and once again a blissful silence befell the room. Only Duo’s gasps and

Trowa's moans could be heard with the occasional pop of abused joints punctuated by grunts.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Thirty~Three

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I'm here for your love and I'll make my stand. We we're born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Dorothy stretched as she folded herself gracefully out of the soft down coverlet and even softer mattress of the Princess' bed. She felt invigorated from the rest and this feeling of power still left over from her last session with the stubborn heiress. While annoying, she did respect the iron will of Relena. It would make victory that much more sweeter in the end after all. Skilled opponents were always satisfying kills.

Speaking of kills, it was time to check and see if the Princess was awake.

“Good Morning to you your highness.” Dorothy said with a feral smile as she stepped into the next room where Relena lay tied to the bed face down, whip marks scarring her bared flesh.

“Do not mock me witch. Whip me, beat me, punish me, abuse me. I will never break, I will never beg. I am stronger than you.” Relena weakly, yet firmly replied. Dorothy smiled; she so loved seeing strong ones finally succumb.

“You only think you are stronger. You will learn the truth.” Dorothy said with a dismissive wave of her hand.

“Nay, you will learn and one day you will pay for your wickedness. That is my faith. For every action of evil, justice is visited upon the wielder ten-fold.” Relena said a little stronger as her faith polished her words.

“Faith, how quaint. Faith is nothing more than empty hopes and unfulfilled dreams Princess. Power is real, power is tangible, and power is what gives life and meaning and strength. Strength brings wealth, strength brings followers, strength will crush the weak. Only the strong survive. THAT is the truth Princess. Those without power make up faith to fill the void lack of strength leaves. How empty you must be.” Dorothy purred languidly reclining on the nearby settee, and gracefully choosing a pear from the bowl beside her bit seductively into the ripe flesh.

Relena fought licking her lips with want, as her stomach rumbled against her will. She had been without food and water for two days, but she would not ask. She refused to give in to Dorothy now matter how small the request, she'd nary ask her a thing. She'd rather die.

"Empty? Hardly. I have loved and have been loved, nothing can compare to that feeling. I have seen with my own eyes those you deem weak prevail when all odds to the contrary have been against them. Faith is power, and a stronger power than you will ever hope to obtain. You seek material power, power of the flesh. If you had a soul, you'd realize there was a higher power than yours. You will learn though Dorothy Catalonia, and I pity you when you realize the truth. It is not I who is empty." Relena retorted a smile on her lips and the pear hit her in the face from where Dorothy hurled it at her in anger.

"You pity me? Such fine words from one soon to die Princess, from where I stand it is plainly obvious the higher power you speak of cannot stand up against mine. Save your words, for that is all they are, for the idiots in the senate, those who are swayed by pretty words and grand illusionary persuasions of your golden tongue. I am Power, I am the truth, I am the one they will look to when all is said and done. I will lead us to a new age, and we will become the Gods we were born to be." Dorothy exclaimed and became enraged as Relena laughed.

"You are mad. Your path leads us to hell and if the senate follows you, they deserve that hell." Relena said and the whip cracked.

"Mad? Hell? Your insolence is tiring, here is the truth, feel the power Princess." Dorothy said as the whip began once more to flay tender flesh.

Relena bit her lip and shut her eyes, she would not cry out, she would not give in, not ever. The longer she held out the more time she bought for those struggling to stop Dorothy and Demail on the outside. She only prayed that somewhere Hilde could see her, and would be proud of her. She did this in Hilde's name and nothing was more precious to her than Hilde's approval. Her wise, funny, full of life Hilde, Relena closed her eyes and silently thought to herself that she would be with her love soon, but not too soon. She still had to cling to life and stall Dorothy as long as she could. She hoped Hilde would be patient in waiting for her; Hilde was never very patient to begin with after all.

Thoughts of her beloved brought a smile to her lips even as her skin burned from the punishment of the leather stinging her tender skin. Pain became a numb void as her love and her memories blocked out the world around her, encasing her in the warm sanctuary of her mind. This was the power in which Relena spoke, and this was the power Dorothy would never understand.

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Seven men, three women, and one spirit sat around a table in the very bowels of Treize's mansion, in a hidden room kept solely to hide treasures from thieves and in cases like this, to talk treason.

It was small and the shelves were lined with aged bottles of wine, various parchments, and a few small chests packed with unknown valuables, and recently added, several beds lined the walls, six in total. The humans now counted among said treasures that must be kept safe at all costs.

"I have been on constant watch, I dare not breathe without causing suspicion. My lady cannot leave the estate without a Demail escort; so to say Une is a prisoner in her own home is an understatement. My daughter thankfully is in the care of Abdul and Catherine who are hiding her on the Sank Moon." Treize began and Trowa choked.

"Catherine?! MY SISTER?!?" Trowa asked and Treize nodded and smiled.

"A fine woman, and why would she not be with her husband?" Treize added and Trowa blanched.

"I need a drink. I swear if she does something stupid, I'LL MURDER HER, she won't need to worry about getting captured." Trowa muttered as Quatre passed his mate a cup of wine and smiled.

"Abdul is a wonderful man, she could have done a lot worse for herself Trowa. I'm sure he'll not let anything happen to her." Quatre reassured and then giggled. "Although, Catherine's not half bad at taking care of herself. She's got enough gusto worth ten men, and if I recall her aim is impeccable with a blade. Mag'ua'nacs' are warriors it does not surprise me Catherine seems to fit in well with them." He added and Trowa rolled his eyes.

"Spare me the reassurance, I know, I just need to digest it all." Trowa said taking a long draught from his cup. "I'm sorry for the interruption, please continue Lord Khushrenada." Trowa said and Treize smiled and nodded his head.

"And it is just Treize gentlemen to you. I do know my place among you, and I do not aspire for your deference, but seek your lasting friendship. Not to mention, technically, Quatre here outranks me, and thus you do by being his Prince-consort." Treize said with a wink before pouring more wine

into everyone's glasses.

"That brings me to more findings actually." Treize began as he set the decanter back on the table. "I have had much opportunity during my forced sequestering to read. The senatorial library can be accessed without suspicion, and I have been reading. Reading everything from vague reports of blood rites, to slavery records. I have learned a great deal. Quatre is not the only one in this room who out ranks me. Nor is he the only one in here only half human." Treize began turning his gaze to Sally.

"I already know my past Treize. My mother was not human and yes, an ousted noble from yet another world the Oz'rialites conquered. It still did not keep us from falling too." Sally said and Treize reached out and took her hand and kissed it with respect.

"And all that you do to fight back makes those who fell along the way proud. As I'm sure your mother would be of you right now. A mother who is still alive Sally, and who is on her way here to join you." Treize said and Sally gasped.

"What? How? I saw her taken, it can't be true." Sally said tears stinging her eyes.

"Taken, but escaped. I found her by accident and I contacted her, the details are unimportant. But her majesty thankfully found sanctuary within the missionary pilgrims of Libra and their protective caravans."

"Because you can't shoot someone you cannot see." Duo said smirking. "Even I know they have cloaking devices on their ships."

"You know because that is where you were born young Duo." Treize said and Duo nodded.

"Yeah, I know. But you can't bring in supplies when the cloaking device is on or when it malfunctions." Duo sighed. "I remember, I also remember being ripped out of my mother's arms thank you very much. And unless you want the entire sob story of my misspent youth can we move on and discuss what we're going to do in the future? Like getting the Princess Peacecraft out of Danger?" Duo asked.

“Right, Lena’s in trouble!” He spoke again, but obviously Hilde was doing the talking this time. Treize shook his head, he had a working knowledge of possession and power, but understanding it was indeed difficult.

“Then we shall continue, but I must warn you that what I have read of Lady Catalonia is bone chilling.” Treize began and Quatre visibly shuddered.

“I know.” Quatre said softly, eyes pleading for Treize not to elaborate. “We know, now please do you know where the Princess is? I’d like for us to get in and out as quickly as possible. I do not want to face Dorothy here on this planet. I’d like a battlefield where she does not have the advantage.” Quatre said and Treize nodded.

“Keen strategic sense Prince Quatre. Yes, I believe the Princess is still in her home, all communications to it are monitored and blocked and my repeated requests for an audience still come up as the Princess has taken ill and is not receiving guests.” Une spoke up at last and looked to Duo but spoke to Hilde. “I’m sorry Hilde, I fear the worst.”

“Don’t fear, just show me the door and stay out of my way.” Hilde said and Duo frowned.

“Um, pardon me missy, MY BODY, MY RULES. We follow Quatre on this, we go in as a team, leave as a team. We wait to plant MY foot up bitch trolls ass until we are at a better advantage.” Duo scolded Hilde... himself. It would have been comical had it not been serious as his face contorted in various images of outrage and defiance as spirits battled for control of the body both were inhabiting.

Heero just laid his face down upon the table and began muttering something under his breath about bad luck, why him, and Maker save him from madness.

“Hilde, Duo, please. Duo is right this time. Hilde can direct us to the places she believes Relena may be held, but Hilde I beg you, just be a voice, no matter what happens, we cannot be separated. We go in, we get out and then we run. We must lure Dorothy away from here, to a place where we can fight her on level ground where we have the advantage. Please.” Quatre said and Duo nodded.

“I promise Quatre, just promise me I get a good old fashioned chunk of her butt when all is said and done.” Hilde said and Quatre smiled.

“Gift wrapped if you so wish it. Thank you Hilde.”

“Yeah, yeah. Whatever, can we go now?” She asked and Quatre shook his head.

“Rest now, we’ll go tonight under cover of darkness.” Quatre assured and with that the meeting drew to a close and those who would be infiltrating the Peacecraft estate at twilight sought their beds to gain strength for the mission at hand.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Thirty~Four

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I'm here for your love and I'll make my stand. We we're born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

“Quatre, if I have to clobber you in the head to make you sleep I will.” Trowa grunted as the form beside him tossed yet again in the narrow bunk. Forgoing separate beds, three stood empty and three couple sought comfort in close proximity while they slept.

Heero and Duo were nestled together; Duo's heavy and rhythmic breathing indicating he was well into repose. Across the room, in a cocoon of blankets lay Wufei and Sally, Wufei's arms looped loosely around her shoulders, her head on his chest, both clearly fast asleep as well.

Trowa however was not so fortunate. Quatre was restless; making Trowa's attempts to drift off futile.

“I'm sorry Trowa, I'll move to another bed.” Quatre whispered and arms snaked around his waist stalling his movements.

“No you will not. Roll over on your stomach. I'll get you to relax if it kills me.” Trowa said and Quatre turned. Trowa's warm hands began softly kneading Quatre's bare back, his fingers soothing as they traced patterns in the flesh.

“Mmmmmm” Quatre sighed into the pillow as every tense muscle began to grow warm and turn to putty underneath Trowa's palms.

Soon Trowa's gentle coaxing paid off and Quatre's breathing slowed and grew deeper. The fluttering of blond eyelashes on soft pink cheeks proved Quatre was at last asleep. Trowa smiled and placed a loving kiss between Quatre's shoulder blades as he stretched out beside his lover

and with a smile of devotion still lingering on Trowa's lips, he too succumbed to slumber and took his repose with his life's meaning tucked protectively in his arms.

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"You want us to wear WHAT?" Duo asked as Zechs appeared down in the cellars with disguises and their last meal before heading out into the night.

"I want you to wear what I brought. The Senate is looking for five MEN, not five women." Zechs said as Duo held up the rough woolen dress and cloak.

"I'm gay, not a transvestite." Duo hissed in a surly mood.

"I don't expect you to wear it all night Duo, just while we're in the street, over your normal clothes. It'll help us if people think I am transferring sex slaves to a prospective client. After all, night is the time this trade takes place in the area of the city we will be in. Lords would rather not have their seedy wanton purchases to be seen in the light of day." Zechs said and Duo grunted.

"Convenient. I swear what next?" Duo asked pouting.

"It could be worse Duo, Zechs is right, no matter how unappealing it is." Quatre said wincing as he looked at his own 'disguise'. A midnight blue burlap nightmare about three sizes too big for his small frame. "I'm certainly not going to look like a prostitute in this, I'm going to look like a reject from a T'ahrvathian circus!" Quatre said holding up the dress before him, getting lost in the folds of fabric.

Trowa, Heero, and Wufei just shrugged, ate in silence, then with quiet grace and reserve pulled their disguises on over their heads.

All five looked positively atrocious. Trowa was far too tall and lanky, his brown frock stopping mid calve. Heero in a ruddy reddish brown sack, Wufei was in black and looked positively livid, Quatre was indeed lost in his dress. He looked like the fat lady had suddenly gone on a diet and had been fired from her position in the circus; Duo however, despite his bemoaning and bitching, at least looked the most presentable. Much to his chagrin, as it took Hilde all of five seconds to begin

commenting. "He needs Boobs."

"Shut up Hilde"

"Well you do. And if you let your hair down you really will look like a girl."

"Shut up Hilde"

"The purple really sets off your eyes. If you really were a sex slave, you'd fetch a good price."

"You'd better get a body soon so I can kill you again. SHUT UP HILDE!"

"You have a woman's ass, nice a full."

"HEERO!!!!!"

"Hn, don't look at me, you do have a nice ass." Heero said with a smirk. Duo screamed.

"ARRRGH! I hate you both, I really do." Duo said flopping into a chair and folding his arms across his chest in a pout.

"Ladies do not sit with their knees pointing out to nine and three Duo."

"Hilde, so help me, you're gonna get it hag. I'm a GUY! I'm supposed sit like this... I have tackle between my legs remember? So DEAL with it bitch."

Quatre had to stifle his laughter, poor Duo.

“Well shall we?” Zechs asked pulling on his cloak. Five men stood and nodded. “Then let’s be on our way.

“Be careful.” Sally said hugging them all tightly before bidding them farewell.

“We will be.” Wufei assured, breaking from his mold and kissing her tenderly before following the others up into the night.

“Come back safe.” Sally whispered to the back of the closed door before turning to find something to do to keep her occupied while she waited.

The door opened once more and Sally turned to see who’d forgotten something, and froze.

“Sal’liah?”

“MOTHER!” Sally cried flinging herself at the cloaked figure at the door. No one other than her parents and Wufei knew her given name. The hood from the cloaked figure fell back revealing a beautiful woman, who hardly looked a day older than her grown daughter. Even if the woman herself was a good three centuries old if not older.

Tears punctuated the joyous reunion when Liah’avien, former Princess of the Veinitia Moons laid her hands upon her daughter’s abdomen. “A girl dragon. Strong, vicious, and wise you will bear. My Granddaughter will be strong.” She said with pride and Sally smiled.

“So it is a girl. I thought so.” Sally said as she sat with her mother on the edge of one of the beds. “And when you meet her father, you’ll see where the dragon part comes into play.” She added and Liah smiled. “I think I did see. The ugly female, handsome male in black?”

“That would be Wufei.”

“Stubborn?”

“Very”

“Hot Tempered?”

“Mama, you still got it, Bingo.”

“Passionate?”

“Oh yeah.”

“Good girl, the harder to train, the better the match. Boredom leads to infidelity. A challenge lasts a lifetime.” Liah said smirking. It was easy to see in that devilish quirk where Sally had inherited her humor.

“I learned that from you.” Sally said snuggling into her mother’s arms while Liah stroked her hair.

“And you remember well. I missed you, so much like your father you look.” Liah said with a sigh.

“Do I?”

“Mm-hum.”

“Wufei reminds me of Papa a little. That same arrogance and will, you’ll like him.”

“I’m sure I will. The fiery ones are always the most fun to tease.”

“Mama, you’re wicked.”

“Why thank you dear.”

“You’re welcome.”

The conversation continued late into the night as mother and daughter caught up on years worth of separation, and discovering that even though parted, blood ties ran strong and even without a role model to learn from beyond the age of six, Sally still had grown into her mother’s daughter indeed.

Wufei was going to bust a vein when he found out he now had two Sally’s to contend with in his life. And Duo was going to sell tickets to the event, saving the front row seat for himself.

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Thankfully, the journey down the darkened streets was a relatively short one, and once within the inner gates of the Peacecraft estate, five men shed their disguises in the bushes and left them with Zechs.

“Stay here Zechs, keep your eyes and ears open, we may need help and you are our only means of escape if we run into trouble.” Quatre cautioned and Zechs nodded.

“I’ll wait here, safe Quest friends.” Zechs said saluting them all proudly. The others returned the gesture of respect and crept on silent feet toward the manor house.

Silently Duo lead the way, taking direction from the equally silent spirit within him. On sure feet he led them around the back and down to an old cellar doorway, half overgrown with ivy. Digging in his hair, Duo pulled out a small metal hook that almost resembled a crochet needle. Placing it in the rusty lock and with a few twists Duo heard the bolt free itself and slowly he opened the door that lead into pitch black.

Once all had descended the few stairs into the old unused cellar Duo carefully pulled the door shut

behind them. A dim barely noticeable light came from Quatre's palm, giving them only the barest amount of illumination. Enough light to see possible hazards in the path, but not enough to illuminate the room and alert anyone to their presence. The small globe hovered above the ground a few inches in front of them as they picked their way through the dusty shelves. Stopping when they came to a staircase leading up into the manor proper.

The globe faded as they followed the light that seeped around the edges of the doorframe at the top of the stairs.

"Hilde says this leads to the Kitchen, then we can take a secret hidden panel from the pantry directly into her Quarters." Duo said in a barely audible whisper.

"Not a good idea. Relena is most likely not in her room anymore. Dorothy is probably using those apartments now. Can we get into an adjoining room from the passageway?" Quatre asked and Duo nodded.

"Yes, Hilde says take the second turn to the right and use the first door. That leads into the servants room attached to the main suite." Duo said and Quatre nodded.

Quietly they tip toed through the kitchen and into the pantry. "No servants anywhere. Not a good sign." Trowa hissed under his breath.

"No it's not, but keep moving." Quatre warned as they slipped into the passageway.

Once more, Quatre conjured a globe of light that hovered above their heads as they squeezed through the narrow space between the walls. Trowa and Duo having to stoop all the way so their heads would not bump into low cross beams.

"This is it." Duo said as all paused before a door in the side of the wall.

"I'll go first just in case." Quatre said squaring his shoulders. It took every fiber of will power in Trowa's body not to reach out and grab Quatre. His love almost over riding his common sense, again.

Quatre was right, Quatre was usually always right. So he remained silent. The small smile of thanks Quatre graced him with was more than enough to set him a little more at ease. Quatre was strong, looks were misleading, and Trowa trusted Quatre to make the wisest choice. So he stood there and watched as Quatre turned and slowly pushed open the door that lead into the servants room of the master suite.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Thirty~Five

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I'm here for your love and I'll make my stand. We we're born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

The smell of human waste permeated the stale air of the stuffy room as Quatre slid back the hidden panel and crept inside. Labored breathing from across the room the only sound coming from the darkness. Quatre tasted the air with his keen senses; no residual traces of mage energy could be found so he knew at the very least Dorothy was not in the room. Still he dared not use his mage light, its use would surely tip her off he was nearby and that was the last thing they needed.

*:: Trowa, you and Duo move to guard the door. Have Wufei do a power seeking to see if he can trace Dorothy's whereabouts and if she's close. I'll need Heero to help carry the Princess. I don't think she's in an fit state to move on her own judging from what I can hear of her breathing.::*

Quatre sent his mental instructions and Trowa nodded and through hand gestures the team moved into their various positions. Wufei staying in the passageway and sinking into a semi trance as he began his spiritual journey through the estate in search of the witch who had taken possession of it by force and treachery.

She was far too close for comfort, and getting closer. “Move fast. She's coming.” Wufei said in a harsh whisper. As Heero cut the ropes that bound the unconscious Princess to her bed, the smell of festering wounds and her having to live in her own secretions an affront to olfactory glands and both he and Quatre swallowed the reflex to gag as they wrapped her in a fairly clean blanket and gingerly carried her back toward the passageway.

“Everyone out.” Quatre ordered standing sentry as the rest scurried back into the wall like mice. Trowa was the last through and just as he stepped in, Quatre shut the panel door behind him.

*::QUATRE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!::* Came Trowa's furious mental cry of outrage.

*::Buying you time, this is my vision Trowa, and the only way the rest of you will live is if I do this. Trust me, this path is the only one I can take to ensure you survive. I'm sorry my love, I couldn't tell you, you'd try to stop me. Just go, I will not die, not yet. Just go I will lead her in this game, she will*

*not conquer me. Go and prepare, this battle is not over, I will meet you at its end, this I vow to you. I love you, now go. HURRY!*:: Quatre answered and though it tore his soul from his body, Trowa obeyed and ran after the others who were already well ahead of him in the passageway. Tears burning his eyes as he stumbled blindly after his comrades.

*:: Quatre, stay safe. Come back to me! Promise me!* :: Trowa begged and the gentle caress of a phantom kiss could be felt upon his lips.

*:: I never leave you Trowa. I am always with you; you hold my heart in your hands now and forever. Live to fight another day my love. I promise to meet you at our journeys end. I'm sorry I had to deceive you, forgive me.* :: Quatre said as Trowa burst through the pantry and down the cellar stairs.

*:: You will be sorry when I get my hands back on you, you reckless fool. Die on me and I will hunt you down on the spirit plain and throttle you!*:: Trowa said breaking free of the door and towards the bushes where the others had stopped to wait.

*::All the more reason for me to live. I'd rather have you torture me in more pleasant ways. She's coming my love, I must prepare. I love you.*:: Quatre said as Trowa heaving for breath fell to his knees in the bushes. The contact severed.

"I love you too. Oh dear God Quatre!" Trowa wept as Wufei stooped to pick Trowa up.

"Where is he?" Wufei asked, fear evident in his voice.

"He has started the battle we must finish. He said this path was the only way he could take to ensure we all lived. I don't know what he means, he didn't even tell me all the details of his vision. I can only trust him to make the right choice. I have to trust him, it's all I have." Trowa said regaining composure and standing to face the building he had fled from.

"We will meet at this journeys end my love, I return your vow to see this through to the bitter end." Trowa said wiping the tears from his cheeks as he turned to follow his friends to meet with Noin and board Peacemillion.

They could not meet back at Treize's manor, that would be the first place Demail and Dorothy would look. They were headed for the Sank Moon to tend to Relena and plan the next stage of the battle.

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Quatre took a deep breath to calm his nerves, he could show no fear; Dorothy fed on fear. He moved to a chair by the window and sat down in the darkness to wait. The element of surprise was his advantage tonight it was about time Dorothy learned she was not the only one who knew how to deal the cards of fate. Quatre knew he was effectively capturing himself, however no one knew just how strong he was, they knew he was the most powerful, and if he played the fool long enough, not only would they truly underestimate his potential, but the others as well. This was their advantage, this would be how they would win. And Quatre's job in all of this was to deceive them, to make them over confident and less attentive. Mistakes then would be made and Golden opportunities would lie before the others to use to gain ground.

Unlike the others, Quatre had known the initial plan from the beginning. From here the others would begin building their army. Gaining followers from across the Galaxy, manpower and arms from oppressed worlds that needed leaders to raise them out of chains and to freedom. Not just humans, but all peace loving races that wanted to live in a world without fear.

They needed to fight the senate and their physical armies. It was Quatre's job to keep Dorothy out of the equation for as long as humanly possible. He had to keep her focus on him, make her lose sight of the world beyond. He was the only one strong enough to face her one on one and survive.

And survive he would, this he vowed to Trowa, and Quatre never broke his vows.

How he was going to keep her occupied however, still remained to be seen. He only had his visions of her desires to draw from. She wanted him, that much he knew. She wanted what only he could give her, a son with power.

That was what he had to avoid giving her at all costs. He had to keep the hook baited, he had to entice her and trick her, the music has started, and the dance was about to begin.

The door opened and the lights came on. Dorothy stopped in the doorway and barely flinched as she spotted the young man in the chair by the window.

“Well, you lost your opportunity to attack me human.” She purred leaning up against the doorframe. “You should have struck me with my guard down.”

“Hardly fair play that. Not since I am here for other reasons than your demise Lady Catalonia.” Quatre smiled, his eyes locked with hers. There, shock, registered with the barest lifting of her eyebrows. Perfect, his toe was in the door.

“Really? You expect me to believe you are here for a Chat?” Dorothy asked laughing.

“Believe what you will. But I know when I am facing an enemy who is stronger. I am here in hopes of working with you rather than against you. I bring you information, what you do with it is up to you.” Quatre began, crossing his legs casually where he sat.

“And where is the Princess?” Dorothy countered her suspicions raised.

“You do not need her any longer. I put her out of her misery, in much the same manner you did her life mate. I will make no pretense I DO have a conscience.” Quatre said and Dorothy laughed.

“Mores the pity. Human hearts so easily swayed. No matter.” Dorothy said dismissively.

“I bring you the information she could never have provided you. Are you willing to listen?” Quatre asked and Dorothy turned.

“For a while, you amuse me. But the stench in here is an affront to my delicate nature, you will follow me.” Dorothy said and Quatre stood bowing slightly.

“As you wish my Lady.”

He followed Dorothy to the parlor where she motioned for him to sit. “You have twenty minutes to convince me.” She said sternly as she reclined across from him. “Where are your friends? Your

lover?" Dorothy asked and Quatre sighed.

"My friends dear Lady, are all alas dead. The Mag'ua'nacs did not deceive you, my failure caused their deaths and they were burned and offered to the sands to be reborn as true warriors. However, they did leave me alive. For reasons I'm sure you have discovered. My father was once their king. It seems they felt unable to kill the heir. And in regards to my lover, sadly he knows me no longer and has lost his powers. By my own hand." Quatre said not needing help to show his emotional distress.

"How so?" Dorothy asked, so far so good Quatre mused.

"You witnessed my failure in the trails upon my homeland. You surely saw me level that blow upon him. When I struck him, I caused severe brain damage. Trowa is half the man he was before. He has no memory of me, nor of our love. He has become a simpleton, and I have left him to be cared for by the Mag'ua'nacs. Who felt Trowa's punishment for failure was brutal enough. Hence why he still lives. He is however no threat to you." Quatre said and Dorothy glared.

"Far-fetched, but believable thus far. So why do you come here now?" Dorothy began and Quatre sighed.

"I said I have a conscience. Lord Demail's threats towards a child's life trouble me. That is why I sent the Mag'ua'nac and his wife to take the Daughter of Lord Khushrenada to safety. And you are barking up the wrong Tree. I had nary met Lord Khushrenada until I returned home. His agenda may differ from Demail's, thus is the nature of politics, but he is not the one responsible for our training. And even I do not know his or her true identity. They have never made themselves known to any of us, nor their purpose behind training us in the first place. Would you care to hear my theory? I have had ample time to think of it." Quatre asked and Dorothy poured herself of cup of wine.

"Oh do share. You weave an enchanting bedtime fable." Dorothy said and Quatre smiled, as he took the bottle from her hand and finished pouring her glass for her.

"I think this is all a wonderfully orchestrated plot to discredit Lord Khushrenada. And to keep you busy. I think we are tools, trained and used by your grandfather. He fears you, he knows compared to you he is nothing. He needed us to ensure once he removed a political threat in the form of Lord Khushrenada. We would be kept on to ensure he held his seat from you my Lady. I do not hesitate in placing my suspicions on Demail's twisted games. Do you?" Quatre asked and he had to fight the smile. Because the look on Dorothy's face was precisely what he had been gambling on, she

believed him.

“Human, I may just keep you around after all. That is precisely the sort of game my Grandfather would play. I cannot believe I have been so naive!” Dorothy said throwing her glass across the room.

Quatre laid a gentle hand to her wrist. “Nay, not naive my Lady. You are far from that. He has been planning this since you were small. He saw then the potential you had over him and knew he would need us when you reached your full power. Just in case he failed to secure your loyalty and devotion to him by the time you reached maturity. We were his back-up plan no doubt. We were put into action because he saw no way to tame such a wild and beautiful power.” Quatre was laying it on thick, pulling out all the seductive tricks of phrase and subtle looks he could.

She bought it, hook, line and sinker. Now phase two of his plan. Get her off the planet and away from Dermal before he could change her mind, and before she could learn the truth. He needed to get her secluded from information, buying his friends as much time to gain control as they could. “I think it is prudent you leave here my Lady. I know not of others, but I would not put it past Dermal.”

“My father once told me, keep friends close to you, and your enemies closer. No, I stay here. I will watch my Grandfather and learn his real agenda. And you will stay with me.” Dorothy said.

Damn, this wasn't going to be that easy obviously. But it was enough to start, he had her begrudging trust, and that was the hardest obstacle, he just had to be on his toes and keep her ear as he had it now. It was time to make up some creative lies to surround Dermal with in the meantime. Drive this wedge in deeper between the Senate and their witch.

“I have every intention of staying with you while you need me. However, I will not be your slave. I am no slave and I have come here to offer you assistance as the Prince I am and a fellow talent. Is that understood?” Quatre said, he couldn't appear too soft after all.

“You have Mag'ua'nac blood in you after all. Fierce tongue and bold. I do find a respect in a warrior, so I will afford you that much. You will not be treated as a slave but your comings and goings I will be aware of, is that clear?” Dorothy ordered and Quatre nodded.

“I will inform you of my movements, so long as they are not hindered. I do have a planet and people I am responsible for now. But I have come to offer you aide, and aid you I will.” Quatre said

and Dorothy nodded.

“Fine, then let us talk of what more you theorize on over dinner.” Dorothy purred and Quatre smiled.

“Ever the gracious lady. I am honored.” Quatre said as Dorothy rang for servants.

A terrified young woman came to the door. “Yes, my lady?” She asked with a quivering voice.

“Make a room ready for my guest. His highness Prince Quatre and attire him as befitting his station. We will dine together in one hour.” Dorothy ordered and the woman bowed.

“Yes, my Lady. Please follow me your highness.” She said and Quatre stood and dared kiss the back of Dorothy’s hand.

“In one hour my lady.” He said bowing and then regally leaving the room. Dorothy laughed as she lay back in her seat.

“I still do not trust you, but this will be entertaining nonetheless. We’ll see in time if you speak the truth or not. Tonight however, I think I will have some fun after all.” She said laughing into her wine as she sipped heavily from its cup.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Thirty~Six

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I'm here for your love and I'll make my stand. We we're born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Trowa was on automatic pilot, an efficient machine as everyone made the trek to Peacemillion through darkened streets. Never uttering a sound, never blinking, just single mindedly getting to his destination. Duo, or rather Hilde had Duo plastered to Heero's side helping to carry Relena, the tears following a mixture of Duo's ever present concern for those who suffered and Hilde's anger and rage at seeing her beloved in the condition she was in. Zechs face was a mask of grim determination and anger, his sister was alive, but only just, and the calculating look meant he was considering visiting the same harm upon the person of one Dorothy Catalonia.

Wufei and Heero just wanted out of the nightmare as quickly as possible, seeing those they cared for in such personal torment was enough to try even the strongest of men's emotional control. Not to mention everyone was half livid, half terrified over Quatre's actions. What Trowa was feeling still remained to be seen, if he showed them any emotion at all, he had seemed to shut down once more. Reverting back to the Trowa they had met that first afternoon. A blank, emotionless stare, the stoic shroud once more firmly in place.

Sally, Noin, and a new passenger were awaiting the others on board the flight deck, the stranger stepping forward immediately to take the Princess from Heero who was reluctant to hand her over to the newcomer.

“It's alright Heero, this is my Mother. A TRUE healer.” Sally said helping her mother lift the wounded burden out of Heero arms and rush her to a bed to be cared for with haste while the others prepared for take off.

“Her Mother?” Wufei asked jaw agape as his mate and a woman who looked around the same age disappear behind a cabin door.

“Liah is a Veinetian, they are a very long lived race. She's a lot older than you think she is Wufei.” Noin said moving to the co-pilot's seat. “Wait a minute? Where's Quatre?” She asked and Zechs grumbled.

“Being reckless and a fucking martyr. We’ll explain on the way.” Zechs said slamming levers and buttons as he fired up the engines.

“Oh just wonderful. Son of a bitch.” Noin hissed in a foul mood as she too began forcefully hitting controls in anger and frustration. “I hope he knows what he’s doing.”

“He does.” Came the soft and bereft sounding baritone of Trowa behind Noin’s seat. She turned pitiful eyes toward Trowa only to see him sigh then move to a seat to secure himself for departure.

Noin’s heart broke for him, how many more days of torment must they endure? She was beginning to regret ever becoming a part of this battle. She felt as if they were asking too much of them now, no one, not even for a cause as needed as this one, should have to endure such strife. It wasn’t fair.

“I know what you’re thinking beloved. No it’s not fair, and I will spend the rest of my life making it up to them for the hell they are going through now.” Zechs said with a sigh as they began their ascent through the atmosphere and headed toward his former homeland of the Sank Moon.

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Duo paced the room twisting his braid with worry. “Hilde please don’t knot my hair. Twist something else.” Duo scolded and Duo/Hilde dropped the braid and began picking at threads in worn breeches.

“I’m sorry Duo. I’m just...”

“I know, worried. It’s all right Hilde.” Duo said with a sigh wishing there was more he could do for her in comfort; it was hard to hug his own shoulders after all.

Thankfully though at that moment Sally and Liah came out from the back of the ship. “She’ll be fine. Malnourished but sound. She’s quite a strong young woman.” Liah said and Duo/Hilde let out a sigh of relief. Liah quirked an eyebrow “Two in one? Male and Female, you are possessed.” Liah

said and Duo nodded.

“Yeah, Hilde here is Relena’s life mate. She kinda got herself killed. I’m just hosting for her till we figure out what to do with her.” Duo said and Liah frowned.

“Cheating death is not wise. Let her pass over.” Liah cautioned.

“I’m passing over no where until the bitch that killed me and almost killed my Lena pays!” Hilde spat and Liah smiled.

“Vengeful spirit indeed. Just make sure when it is time to let this fellow have his body back, you let him.” Liah said, a stern look in her eyes that showed she very much meant what she said.

“I know. Duo’s my friend. I won’t make a permanent home here, I do know if I cannot find a body of my own that I will have to pass over. We’re only stalling it for the time being.” Hilde reassured and Liah nodded.

“Good. Now then go see thy beloved. She is awakening.” Liah said and Duo/Hilde bolted into the room.

“No kissing Hilde! I mean it!”

“Just one!”

“No way, you won’t let me kiss Heero!”

“Alright, I’ll let you kiss Heero, Please?”

“Ick! Um, no offense but I don’t like girls. I just hope I don’t gag on her or anything.”

“Duo!”

“I’m teasing. Like I wouldn’t let ya have a good snog? Please! Go for it baby.”

“Thanks Duo.”

“Anytime Babe.”

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Once in the relative safety of his room Quatre dared to reach out. :: *Trowa?*::

:: *Quatre! I’m here! Are you all right?* ::

:: *Yes. For now, I have her ear, I have partially convinced her that is Demail behind our training and not Treize. I have planted the seeds of doubt, but I must stay and help them grow. Believe in me, I will be on my guard. I have a plan.* :: Quatre began then went on to detail them to set Trowa’s mind at ease.

:: It’s a shrewd gamble, but if anyone can pull it off you can love. Please call on me as often as you can. I cannot help but worry. ::

:: *I know, ever the worrywart. It’s part of what I love about you. Are you safely away?* ::

:: *Yes, on our way to the Sank Moon now.* ::

:: *Good, from here on out though, do not tell me where you are or what you are doing. The less I know, the better. Just in case. I have to go love, I must meet her for dinner. I pray I can eat without*

*retching in such foul company.* :: Quatre said and mentally shuddered. Trowa laughed out loud drawing the attention of the others finally.

:: I think you'll manage, you're in fine form tonight. Take care pickpocket. ::

:: *I will. I love you.* ::

:: *And I you. Goodnight love.* :: Trowa said severing contact and turning relieved eyes to his companions.

"He's safe for now. Let me explain." Trowa said as everyone gathered around for the details.

"Crafty indeed. And with his rather innocent features it will be hard for her to believe such a face would lie so blatantly. He really uses all his assets to full advantage. Shrewd move." Wufei said and Sally laughed.

"Are we sure Quatre isn't a woman? I mean this is devious, downright masterful use of sensuality, one bat of an eyelash and he's got her wrapped around his finger." Sally said and Liah grinned.

"True, 'tis women who usually resort to seduction to get ahead in their goals. But then He was once a woman. Some traits remained obviously." She said and Trowa turned, jaw agape.

"Excuse me? Come again? Quatre is no woman. And who says only women are so devious?" Trowa asked and both mother and daughter smirked.

"Let me rephrase. Yes, there will always be exceptions to every rule. But in my seven hundred turnings I have learned a few gender differences have basis in fact. Men are more confrontational. More apt to dive in and sort out differences with fists and hard labor. Women however, throughout history, being physically weaker for the most part have developed a way to win without brute force. They convince others to do the work for them basically, by the sexual bat of an eye, or turn of the hip. Or they create enough confusion with words that others do the work and think it was their idea all along. Men are upfront, women are more subtle, the end is the same, just methods differ. It is the way of nature; it has been so since the beginning." Liah said and Duo snorted.

“Bullshit.”

“Believe what you will. I can only give my view and take on life as I see it.” Liah said and Trowa still looked out of sorts.

“What do you mean he used to be a woman?” Trowa asked and Liah laughed.

“Not in this life dear, never fear. Many ages past, he has an old soul. One I have served many times in the past. I have lost count how many reincarnations there have been. I recognized him immediately when I saw you leave tonight. In every life, he or she has looked the same. The same as the first, you did see the statue on his home planet yes?” Liah asked and all nodded.

“She was the first, in this part of the galaxy at least, and has come back innumerable times to guard her people and others in one form or another. Her last Incarnation died saving my family from slaughter when my world was over thrown. His name was Qatar, a fine and noble man. Small of stature, full of grace, and ever powerful and kind, he smuggled out my family and brought me to MOII where I would later meet Sally’s father. He was wounded in the flight and died just after we landed sadly.

Before that her name was Qatrin, and she led the revolt on Ithaicus minor and freed the slaves from the ore mines there. The name is always a variation of the original name she bore, Quatrina. Man or woman, matters not, the soul is ever the same. I am honored to serve that soul once more.” Liah said and the others just sat there stunned.

It explained a lot about Quatre really, but it was still a shock to hear it from the mouth of one who had known Quatre in at least two of his previous lives.

“Take heart Trowa. He does know what he is doing, even if he does not consciously realize it, his sub-conscious is ages old, with wisdom of many years to draw from. Each incarnation is a unique individual after all. The soul may be old, but the body is new. He will make mistakes, and have personal tastes. For instance, Qatar was most assuredly a womanizer, and liked a myriad of partners in his bed. Qatrin was a celibate who took a vow of chastity. Qatar must have been making up for lost time.” Liah teased and Trowa choked.

“I didn’t need to know that.” He said and Liah smiled.

“Ah, but in each life, despite the escapades or lack there of, you always appeared. Trowa, Trifina, Triton.” Liah purred and Trowa just blinked.

“Think you a soul mate can be reborn again and again without it’s match? No it cannot.” Liah said smiling. “Your soul is just as old. Your talent is always the storm dancer. Thine eyes are ever the green of life, and your mood is ever serene. Known you just as many times.” Liah said patting his hand.

“Me?” Trowa croaked and Liah grinned.

“Yes you. Triton caught the heart of Qatrin and removed a life of chastity with one kiss, Trifina made the randy Qatar fall all over himself to win her. And Trowa is here for Quatre. But you showed up much earlier than I expected. You are usually quite late.” Liah said and Duo laughed.

“Must’ve learned how to tell time this go around.” Duo teased slapping Trowa’s back.

Trowa just glared. Liah laughed. “But still has that dry sense of humor I see.” She added standing and stretching.

“I suggest you all get some rest. You still have much to do, dark times are ahead, and you must be ready to face them.” Liah ordered sending them all off to bed.

And like Sally she was obeyed without argument. Another Trait Sally had obviously inherited from her mother. You just knew not to argue with that tone of voice after all.

Trowa went to bed, his mind reeling with revelations, was it true? Why wouldn’t it be? It did explain why he was drawn to Quatre in a way that even he couldn’t explain. It just WAS, it was still a lot of information to digest. Somehow the thought of a womanizing Quatre sent shivers up Trowa’s spine. He really did not need that visual, he was going to have nightmares about it, he just knew it.

Then it dawned on him, Trifina... that was a woman's name.

He was definitely going to have nightmares now. "Thanks a lot Liah!" Trowa groaned flopping into bed and throwing an arm over his eyes in defeat. Life was just too insane, and getting crazier by the minute.

He was afraid to ask what would be next.

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Dorothy made her way to the kitchen and eyed the meal that was being prepared then turned to her slaves. "Put this in his soup." She said passing a small packet to the cook.

"W-what is it milady?" She asked trembling

"None of your concern, just do it or you will answer to me."

"Y-yes milady." The cook said pocketing the packet.

Quatre grinned where he sat in front of his mirror, watching the scene below in the kitchen. "Please, I am not that stupid. That's the oldest trick in the book. Drugging me is not an option. I think I've suddenly developed an allergy to leeks. No leek soup for me tonight. It's going to be a lot harder than that to get what you want witch." Quatre said waving his hand and letting the image fade from the mirror. He then turned and headed down to meet his hostess for dinner.

Dorothy's eyes were positively wicked with intent as Quatre sat opposite her at the table. "I must say you look infinitely better in proper attire Prince Quatre." She purred and Quatre bowed his head.

"Thank you for the compliment. You always look divine my lady." He returned, the gagging impulse was going to be hard to suppress tonight; that was for sure. She would be beautiful really had the personality been just as beautiful. It was amazing how ugly and repulsive someone could become

despite physical features.

“Manners too. Your human blood must surely be more muted than I had once thought. But thankfully not in your appearance, even humans are more appealing to the eye than even the most handsome Mag’ua’nac. All so dark, not golden like you.” Dorothy purred reaching out to run fingers through Quatre’s hair.

“So fine and delicate. Did your lover like you this way?” She asked and Quatre pulled back and frowned.

“Hardly appropriate talk for a dinner table, and if you please my lady, my loss is still fresh and I am still in a state of mourning. I would rather not discuss my love at all. He may still live, but Trowa as he was is dead by my own hand.” Quatre said and Dorothy dared laugh. It took every ounce of self-control Quatre had to remain calm.

“My table, I am curious. Indulge me. Tell me, were you the taker or the taken? You are bold, but I have a feeling not so bold in the bedroom. Did you like being taken Quatre?”

“Madam, I refuse to answer. I will not discuss my personal trysts with you.” Quatre said wanting to slap her for being so vulgar.

“Taken, I thought so. Have you ever had a woman Quatre?”

“I have never wanted a woman. Nor will I, I am homosexual and have not an interest in the opposite sex in those matters.” Quatre said glaring daggers now. She wanted the truth, she was going to get that much for damn sure.

“You have not met the right woman then. Yet.” Dorothy said reaching out to run a seductive finger down Quatre’s cheek. “Such beauty is wasted on a man. And wasted further if you have no heir Highness.”

She sure didn’t waste time Quatre thought, itching to bolt from his chair to get away from her. She just plain made his skin crawl.

“I need not concern myself about producing an heir. There are conveniences at my disposal in which procreation is not needed in the physical aspect. When I am ready, I will have a child created by one of my genetic experts. Even Oz’riah has test tube facilities available to the barren. It is ancient technology.” Quatre said and Dorothy snorted.

“You would let such barbaric methods be used with your seed? Dangerous for you with such talent.”

“I have loyal subjects.”

“You have far too much faith in them. A single woman is needed, and you should choose one with power. Make your kingdom stronger in the process. An Alliance is needed for a man in your position.” Dorothy began but before she could finish, the serving slave appeared with the soup and a feral smile crossed her lips.

“Ah, let us pause in our chat to sup. Perhaps you will think while we eat on this Prince Quatre. Your heir I can give you that, your son could be a god and rule not only your homeland but all of the senate and the Oz’rialian Empire.”

“High aspirations, and much burden to place on just one man’s shoulders. I am content with just my homeland, and I would hope my offspring would be just as content. I am honored by your offer my Lady, but I must decline.”

“Don’t decline so quickly. Think on it first, have your soup and sleep on it, tell me in the morning your decision.” Dorothy said and Quatre pretended to sniff his soup.

“I cannot have the soup, but I will sleep on it My Lady.”

Dorothy looked annoyed. “What is wrong with your meal?”

“I am afraid I am allergic to Leeks. Even mages are prone to hives my Lady.”

Now Dorothy looked positively livid. Quatre spared himself a mental pat on the back. He had done well so far, he only had to keep this up.

He hoped he could, he had a sneaking suspicion Dorothy was not going to waste time and up the stakes sooner than he hoped.

He must remember to bar the door before going to sleep tonight.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Thirty~Seven

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I’m here for your love and I’ll make my stand. We we’re born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Trowa stood once again upon the shores near the home of Professor “S” as he slept. The last time he had dreamt of this place was the night he and Quatre had first made contact after so many years apart. He turned to face the outcropping where he had his first glimpse of Quatre the man as opposed to the boy he had known, and sure enough. “If you don’t want me in your dreams…”

“I know Quatre, don’t open the door and call you.” Trowa finished his lover’s sentence then held out his hand to help him down off the rock face. “I never said I didn’t want you here now did I?” Trowa added and Quatre smiled and shook his head.

“Your body is safe?” Trowa asked concerned and Quatre nodded.

“Quite safe for now. I bolted the door and put a mage lock on it. I’ll be awakened if she comes within ten feet of the perimeter of the room. Don’t worry love, I’m sleeping peacefully.” Quatre reassured crawling into his dream lover’s embrace “My feet however are cold.”

“Your feet are always cold.” Trowa teased as they walked hand in hand along the stretch of beach.

“Everyone with you alright? The Princess?” Quatre asked and Trowa smiled.

“Fine, but I don’t think she was pleased with Duo giving her a lip lock the moment she opened her eyes. She was relieved though that it was Hilde inside. She’s upset with the news of her death, but just having the spirit near has done wonders for her health.” Trowa recited as they paused and sat in the sand, Quatre crawling into Trowa’s arms and laying his head upon the phantom shoulder of his lover.

“Good, that is a weight off my mind at least. What is Sally’s mother like?” Quatre carried on and

Trowa groaned.

“Just like Sally, or rather like mother like daughter. Poor Wufei.” Trowa said and Quatre laughed.

“Why am I not surprised?”

“I can tell you why actually. According to Liah, she’s known you before. Twice in fact personally, three times only by reputation.” Trowa began and Quatre sat bolt upright.

“Come again? What on earth?” Quatre asked dumbfounded.

“You’ve had more lives than a cat Quatre. Apparently I have too. It’s a long story. But in a nutshell, it seems you and I turn up for big events like this, destroy a lot of things when we do turn up, and pretty much overturn dynasty’s on a regular basis. Sometimes we live to see it through, sometimes we don’t. I have a headache just thinking about it really. We have what Liah calls ‘old souls’ and we continually float through history attaching ourselves to new bodies. But we always end up together, I like that detail.” Trowa said kissing Quatre’s temple.

“Me too. I guess it explains how we knew without knowing. And why we never thought of another after we met. God, that’s so romantic if you think about it.” Quatre laughed still resting his head against Trowa’s chest.

“I guess it is, in an odd sort of way. However, according to Liah, this is the first instance she’s heard of that we both turned out being men. Usually one of us shows up as a man, the other a woman and vice versa.” Trowa said and Quatre snickered.

“Somehow, I cannot picture you as a woman.”

“I’m glad. Don’t. I’ve hurt myself thinking about that one. I must have made a really ugly woman.” Trowa said shuddering.

“I don’t think so. You have wonderfully long eyelashes.”

“Quatre, don’t”

“And your lips have a beautiful shape.”

“Quatre!”

“Your hair is sinfully soft, long and flowing like Duo’s would be...”

“That’s it!” Trowa said pouncing on his laughing mate and rolling in the sand. Mercilessly tickling Quatre’s sides. Quatre squealing and squirming frantically as he tried to escape the dream Trowa as he tortured him with his fingers.

“Okay, I’m sorry, I give!” Quatre cried out breathless.

“That’s better.” Trowa smirked still straddling Quatre, pinning him effectively to the beach.

“You’re so easy to tease. You don’t hear me complaining I was a woman before.” Quatre grinned up at his lover.

“YOU are beautiful in whatever form you choose to manifest in, I have that straight from Liah’s mouth. And we’ve seen what you look like as a woman.” Trowa said and Quatre cocked his head.

“The statue really is me?” Quatre asked and Trowa nodded.

“It is. Shocked?”

“No not really. That would make you the reincarnation of a Mag’ua’nac king.” Quatre said and Trowa shook his head.

“Nope, I thought that too. The King was your second husband. I was your first. But I died during the pilgrimage I guess. Liah said the history is pretty vague, but that is how she learned it.” Trowa said and Quatre sighed.

“I can’t think of ever replacing you.”

“Now, don’t start Quatre. It was years before you re-married. And besides that, it was over a thousand years ago, you were another you. Each Incarnation is a little different from the last; we are still individuals in and of ourselves Quatre. I certainly could never replace you either.” Trowa said leaning over to kiss soft lips.

“I love you so much” Quatre choked, wrapping his arms around Trowa’s neck and burying his face in the crook of his neck. Shaking as silent tears welled up in his eyes.

“I love you too, you big soft hearted fool.” Trowa teased dabbing Quatre’s eyes with his sleeve.

“I can’t help it.”

“I know.” Trowa said rolling onto the sand flipping over on his back and pulling Quatre up to rest on his chest. They lay there just holding one another for what seemed like hours as their real bodies rested miles apart from each other. Their souls however forever entwined, where not even physical distance could keep them apart anymore.

This was being truly one; in mind, heart, and soul. This was their paradise; they made it a reality no matter where they were.

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Quatre awoke with a feeling of utter contentment, despite his current surroundings. It was amazing how refreshed and centered he became with just the slightest contact with Trowa. Trowa was indeed his anchor, and Quatre crawled out of bed, ready for another face off with Dorothy.

He calmly brought down his security barrier and headed out into the manor ready to once again deny her demands.

She was already in the dining room awaiting him to break their fast. "Sleep Well Highness?"

"I did my Lady thank you." He said cheery and with good humor as he bowed formally in greeting then seating himself once more opposite her.

"That mage lock, what was that for hummmm?" Dorothy purred, and without missing a beat Quatre smiled.

"Surely you weave a protection when you are vulnerable. I have always done so since I learned how. It is a habit, one knows not who may be watching." Quatre said as he sipped some juice.

"A habit you will break while with me. It makes me think you do not trust me." Dorothy said and Quatre shook his head.

"I never said I trusted you. As I am sure you do not trust me. Trust is earned. We were enemies but yesterday morning. I have yet to prove my intentions to you, as you have yet to show me you are truly sincere in our alliance. Can you blame me for being cautious?" Quatre asked and Dorothy laughed.

"Nay, and you are honest at least. Had you lied I would indeed be more suspicious of you than I am now." She replied, reclining confidently back in her chair and twirling her spoon in her teacup.

"I did some checking this morning Quatre. It appears the ship Peacemillion left its docking bay just after you appeared here last night. My agents report quite a few cloaked figures making haste to board." Dorothy said and Quatre never flinched, even though his mind was racing for a good explanation.

"And this concerns me how?"

"I thought you could tell me."

"I'm afraid not my Lady. I'm sure half a dozen ships left docking bays the hour I arrived. It's not uncommon. I have been on that ship before it's true. But this trip it is on does not concern me." Quatre said keeping his calm.

"No? Funny, my men swear your Storm Dancer was among the cloaked figures."

"That I know is impossible. Trowa is leagues from here, but then Trowa is rather a non-descript sort. Tall, with brown hair, half the human male population can fit that description. If you think to bait me, you are mistaken, your men are most assuredly mistaken."

"You are either telling the truth, or are exceedingly clever with the turning of your tongue Prince Quatre. Time will tell however. Now, to change the subject, have you thought of my proposition?" Dorothy asked sipping daintily from her cup, her eyes flashing over the rim with desire.

"I have, I must decline my Lady. I do not wish an heir with so much power. I think it unwise and I do not wish to fear my throne when he comes of age."

"I knew you'd say that. I do have a counter proposal." She began and Quatre wanted to scream with frustration.

"The child need not know you are his father. I do want an heir, and one with power strong enough to hold the senate in check. You are the only male in the galaxy that can give me what I want. I want you to give it to me."

"As honored as I am Lady Catalonia. I am not as powerful as you seem to think I am. I am sure you will find a more suitable father for your child. Not to mention, as you already know, no matter how beautiful you are, I am sadly unmoved in that manner." Quatre tried putting it delicately, but still a firm no.

"Not even with a glamour?" She asked effectively changing where she sat, one moment he was

looking at Dorothy. The next Trowa was sitting there before him; Quatre shuddered and turned his face.

“Please do not mock me. And I beg you not to take on that glamour again. It pains me enough I will never be with him again.” Quatre said laying it on as thick as molasses.

“So what form does appeal to you?” Dorothy asked shifting into an apparition of Duo.

“Please, still you mock me. My friends are dead, my lover gone. If you think to gain my affections this way it is having the opposite effect.” Quatre said and Dorothy slammed her fist down on the table.

“I’ve had enough for one morning. Leave me! Go and consider your preferences. For I will have what I want from you, be you willing or not. Is that understood?”

“You will have my aide, you will have my support, and you will have my army. You will nary have my child. That is where I draw the line my lady, and I will not budge.” Quatre said back just as vehemently.

“Not so tender as you would like to have me believe I see. There is a man in you somewhere. And every man will eventually give up what you seem to value so highly. I just must find the way to make you do so.” Dorothy said glaring at Quatre.

“I am not every man, and my resolve is un-wavering. And if you dare try and take what is not offered freely, this offer of aide will be revoked, and the contract I have offered will be null and void. Is that understood?”

“Perfectly.”

“Good.” Quatre said storming out in a huff.

“Consider the contract broken. Tonight you will be mine, willingly or not. I always get what I want

little man. You will learn that lesson well tonight.” Dorothy said with a smile of evil intent firmly in place on her lips. “You said yourself, you know when you are beaten. The weak will always succumb in the end.”

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Quatre ran to his room and bolted the door. “Damn it.” He spat as he paced trying in earnest to think of a way to stall her. They needed more time, and he needed a good plan, and he needed it now.

He closed his eyes and reached out with his mind.

:: Trowa, I need your advice and the others. I have a problem. ::

:: *We’re all here love. What is wrong?* ::

Quatre began his rushed explanation and waited for Trowa to tell the others as he waited patiently for suggestions to start to be fed to him through Trowa.

:: Tell Duo she does not have nuts to kick! I’m serious. I never had to fight off the affections of a woman before! :: Quatre said as Trowa fed the first suggestion back to him.

:: Hilde says she can help, she knows how women think, and how to turn them off like a light switch. Care to be possessed? :: Trowa asked and Quatre smiled.

:: That just may work. Have Duo take her to the plain, I’ll come and get her! :: Quatre said laying down on his bed and going into a semi trance.

There in the distance before him in the gray mists of time stood two figures. One with chestnut hair and a flowing black robe, the other a pristine and glowing centaur.

“I’m gonna miss ya babe. Make sure you keep your yap shut and don’t blow Quatre’s cover.” Duo said hugging the centaur affectionately.

“Give me a little credit will ya? I’ll just be a whisper in his ear. Ready Quatre?” Hilde asked and the winged avatar held open his arms.

“Quite. Thank you for your help.”

“Anytime cutie pie!” Hilde said embracing Quatre and meshing with him.

Unlike Duo, Quatre’s power was intense, and she felt orgasmic as she moved to share his body.

And also unlike Duo, Quatre’s power was so much greater than her own, that no physical changes took place. Quatre still looked exactly as he had before, no traces of Hilde could be seen at all.

Back on Peacemillion, Heero was eternally relieved to see Duo had brown hair again and that dusk and twilight shade of purple back in his large eyes. He was only Duo once more.

Heero did not waste much time looking after that. He just picked Duo up off the floor and wordlessly left the room.

“Duo’s gonna get some nookie!” Sally catcalled and muffled behind the door she heard Duo’s laugh.

“AMEN SISTER!”

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Thirty~Eight

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I'm here for your love and I'll make my stand. We we're born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Quatre decided perhaps his bedroom was not the wisest place to be keeping himself so he decided a walk of the garden was in order. He felt the tell tale itchy spot on the back of his neck, alerting him he was indeed being watched as he settled himself on a marble bench.

:: *She's watching, great. Ready to start to make her gag?* :: Hilde asked a hint of humor in her mental question.

:: What do you mean by that? :: Quatre asked and he could feel Hilde laugh within him, felt her humor spread through his veins like a happy virus.

:: Simple, the reason she's watching is purely this; most women want to see their prospective mates as they REALLY are, not how they act on 'good behavior'. Women want to see the person they are going to be waking up next to the rest of their lives. Well, not in this case. But this is even better, she wants a kid, she's checking you out for bad traits. Time to give her the first one. Start picking your nose. :: Hilde said and Quatre nearly fell off the bench.

:: WHAT?! ::

:: You heard me, start being gross! Pick your nose, then to really make her ill. Really spit. I mean snort snot, loud, disgusting spitting. Nothing turns a woman off faster than men who insist on spitting for the sake of spitting. ::

:: That's going to gross ME out. But worth it I suppose. :: Quatre said really working up a good phlegm ball and hurling it, badly into the bushes and partly down his chin.

:: Ewww:: Quatre thought wiping his chin with a large leaf off a palm frond.

:: Bad idea. :: He added, Hilde laughing once more.

:: That'll take practice. A first for me, I found a man who does not know how to spit. ::

:: Ha, ha, ha. Laugh it up. Can we turn her off without these barbaric and disgusting bodily functions? :: Quatre asked cleaning himself off in the nearby fountain as best he could.

:: Probably, but these are sure-fire methods, fast and easy. I promise I won't tell Trowa on you. ::

:: You'd better not. :: Quatre warned as that itch intensified.

“Are you ill Quatre?” Dorothy asked smirking and handing over a cloth towel.

“No, why do you ask?” Quatre retorted praying she had seen as had been repulsed. Taking the offered towel.

“You obviously are not the sort who spits. I happened to see your little mishap. I assumed if you had to resort to spitting, you were being plagued by some ailment.”

Damn. All that nonsense for nothing, Trowa was right, his manners were too good sometimes.

He took the towel and began to wipe his mouth. “Just a touch of moisture in my lungs. I am used to the desert.” He said suddenly feeling a little woozy.

Oh no, the towel.

He managed once last cold look at her before his eyes blurred and he fell unconscious onto the grass.

“Silly little man. Like I could pass up this opportunity? A little ether can be a wonderful tool.” Dorothy said calling for her servants. “Take him to my quarters.” She ordered walking ahead and laughing merrily.

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Hilde was pissed. Try as she might, Quatre was dead asleep and nothing she could do could bring him to consciousness. “Fuck! Wake up blondie now is not the time.” She said battering against the confines of his sub-conscious. “WAKE UP!!!!” Hilde shouted.

Nothing.

Then a voice from another source filtered in and Hilde ceased panicking.

:: Quatre?! Quatre answer me! :: Trowa’s voice called out in concern.

:: TROWA! Thank god. The bitch put knock out drops on a towel, he’s out like a light. I can’t feel a thing, I don’t know what’s going on, and I’m worried. ::

:: You and me both. If she lays a finger on him there will be hell to pay. And I cannot get there in time even if I wanted to. We’re here on Sank and there are about fifty delegations here to meet with us. We have our army. It appears Rashid has been busy rallying rebel groups from across the galaxy in our name. We have a few days yet to coordinate efforts and to discuss terms from the various planets that have come here seeking our help in gaining liberation from Senate control. It’s a mad house here, I was trying to tell Quatre to be ready, we’ll be returning with force in three days. This is not good news. :: Trowa related and Hilde growled.

:: No it’s not, how do I get out of Quatre’s body? And how can I DO something? ANYTHING!?! :: She asked and Trowa told her to wait, he’d ask.

Minutes passed in infuriating silence before she heard Trowa speak again.

:: I do not like this, but it seems we have no choice. Can you get back to the spirit plain on your own? :: Trowa asked and Hilde sighed.

:: I don't know, I can try. Why?::

:: We need to draw Quatre and Dorothy there somehow if we can. Liah says during the act of copulation she'll be vulnerable. If we can draw their mage signatures there to fight while they're, while they, ah, maker, I can't say it. ::

:: Don't then, I understand, just continue.:: Hilde said with sincere compassion.

:: Quatre can't fight with his body, but if he can muster enough power to pull her here, he's got a chance. Leaving her still in action, but a shell on autopilot basically. That's where you and I come in. I can lead you to her body while they fight. If you take possession of it you can bar her from returning to it. You're a purifying entity Hilde, you can do it, you naturally repel evil. It's our only chance of taking her out for good. Then for God's sake when you have possession of the body, get it off him, please. :: Trowa said, his emotions obviously in turmoil.

:: That would be my first move, don't worry Trowa. I won't let her have him, I love him too and I will not let him be violated. I promise. But I'll leave this plan as a last recourse. I'm still going to try and wake him up first, stop it before anything can happen. :: Hilde said and she felt Trowa's phantom embrace surround her senses.

:: Thank you Hilde. May the Maker save and bless you. ::

:: He already did when he gave me friends like you. Now go on, get to work on your end. I'll do what I can here. See you in three days, whatever happens. :: Hilde said turning to batter against Quatre's mind once more.

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Quatre fought against the fog of his mind. He had heard all of Trowa and Hilde's conversation but found it impossible to answer them for some reason. He was caged, and not just by drugs. The drugs had only put him to sleep, making him vulnerable. Dorothy had gone one step further and had woven a mage shield around him to keep him trapped in his own mind and unaware.

She had underestimated him after all, because he was very much aware, just unable to respond. Her shield had holes, and he would find them and tear it down. He had to stop her, before it was too late.

Suddenly he felt her presence and his anger boiled as within the confines of her shield she materialized. Her mage signature seeking him out where he was trapped within the plain where his sub-conscious always resided, he was ever connected to the plain where power was born, it was what gave him his strength. She was on his turf now, shield or not, the fight had begun. "Little man, you are mine. Can you feel me? Can you feel my hands on you? No? Your body is beautiful and so responsive. I told you all it took was the right woman."

"No, it took you to trap my mind away from my body. You will not keep me here, nor will you have what you are after." Quatre spat, his wings twitching in fury.

"Careful, you may molt Avatar." Dorothy mocked, her hair a crown of fire, her golden skin with a velvety sheen of fur, her lion's tail twitching, and her own set of leathery wings folded neatly against her back.

"Careful or I will not be merciful. I can be pushed only so far Witch."

"Hmmm, I think I like you best when you are cordial. No matter, I am already upon you, I'll have what I want soon enough. Then I shall just run you through with my blade and let you die slowly. Weak, so weak, did you think you could ever beat me? I have always known the Truth Quatre Raberba Ibn Winner! I knew you were all here that night, I knew you rescued the Princess, I knew you stayed to throw me off my guard, and I know your lover is on the Sank Moon with a pitiful army of rebels. Demail is already on his way to wipe them out. Come this time tomorrow, they will be nothing but particles of debris floating in space. Checkmate, Prince." Dorothy cackled and Quatre's fury built to a fever pitch.

"The game is not over, until the Queen falls." Quatre said crackling with power. His aura became blindingly bright, and Dorothy's eyes widened.

“You cannot have so much power! It’s impossible!” She cried just as Quatre ran to her, pinning her within the shield.

“Anything is possible when you love someone.” Quatre said, clutching her mage signature firmly. Then he let loose his power in a blast from his very center. Its magnitude intensifying as it rebounded off the confines of her shield. Engulfing them both, and her talons clawed at him where she writhed in grip. His power piercing her like thousands of razor blades, shredding her mage signature as he held fast, never letting go as she tore at him, and where he took the same battering blows from his own power release.

“You’re mad! You’ll kill us both!” She wailed and Quatre only smiled.

“Yes, I will. But in the end I win. You have not the heart to sacrifice yourself for someone you love. I do. Trowa will live, my friends will live, and they will bring peace to our people, our kin, and our allies. This I have seen, this is what I believe in, and this is my power. A power greater than you will ever know.” Quatre said as he let the power flow through him freely, never relenting in his assault as they both collapsed, the power too great to withstand anymore. Crushing, bruising, and pummeling them without mercy, without fear, and without remorse, tearing them both apart and burning them with it’s intensity and heat.

Hilde cried out for Trowa as the barrier she had been beating against began to crack, and pure white light began to shoot out like daggers.

Hilde in a panic fled, and found herself running into the apparition of Trowa, once more her intuition and self-preservation instincts leading her to the plain without her conscious self realizing what she was fleeing to.

“Oh God, Trowa!” She said and Trowa, tears on his face just nodded.

“I know, I can feel it, I always feel him. We have to hurry, he’s dying.” Trowa said running, leading her back toward the barrier.

The barrier was gone, and only a dim glow remained. The glow was Quatre, shredded and wounded. Broken wings, snapped like twigs, his robes in shreds, his skin baring claw marks, and in his scorched and burned arms, a blackened and burnt out shell that had once been Dorothy’s mage signature.

“Hurry, we don’t have time to waste. No one can live if the mage signature dies, her body is fading. Go to it now Hilde, I’ll take care of Quatre. Follow your instincts, trust them and you’ll be shown the way. Hurry go, this is your only chance Hilde.” Trowa ordered.

“But Quatre!!!” She wailed and Trowa shook his head.

“Nothing you can do, just go.” Trowa said blinded by tears. He wasn’t about to lose them both. He knew Quatre better than that, it would be what he wanted. Hilde vanished in tears, and Trowa ripped the corpse from Quatre’s arms hurled the form of Dorothy into the mists, where it scattered into motes of dust. Swallowed by the mists to be devoured by the wraiths that thrived on filth, evil, and chaos. He then gingerly pulled Quatre into his embrace, weeping into his long blonde hair.

Eyes like the twilight opened and the tiny universe and starry expanse of those eyes gazed lovingly up at his elfin lover. “Trowa, I did it. She’s gone. But Demail is coming for you, you must warn the others.” Quatre said and Trowa laid a finger to Quatre’s lips.

“Shhhhh. We know, Treize sent warning they were coming, we are prepared, just rest, don’t leave me. You promised me we’d meet at our journey’s end.” Trowa wept and Quatre gave him a bittersweet smile.

“And so we meet as I promised my love.” Quatre said weakly and Trowa’s eyes burned with fire and pain.

“I am not ready to lose you, I will not lose you, Sally and Liah are coming, I’ve called them. Just hang on Quatre please. Take my strength, hold it, I beg you. Please don’t give up.” Trowa pleaded feeding his power to his beloved, trying to bolster him before he faded from existence.

“It’s too late Trowa. But I will try, I promise.” Quatre said sighing and feeling Trowa’s power pour in, only to pour back out once more. His wounds too severe to contain the power within him any longer, he had over used his talents, and he was too weak to hold onto the power that was fed to him.

He could only close his eyes and sink into Trowa’s arms. Living these last few moments awash in love and in the arms of the man he had given up his life for in order to save.

# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Thirty~Nine

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I'm here for your love and I'll make my stand. We we're born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Hilde opened her eyes and gasped as if drowning. It took a moment for her to come to focus on reality and realize just where she was, being held in arms much stronger than she would have ever given him credit for. As he had in the spirit plain, Quatre had made sure Dorothy could not escape him, and he held her in a vice like grip. Then the rest of their positioning came to the forefront, and Hilde choked back a sob. The Deed had been done, the tell tale signs of completion could be felt beyond doubt, and they were still joined.

She didn't want to know the details, she just wanted to get off Quatre, he'd been used enough. His grip weakened, and even though his spirit was still away, his voice found itself in a soft whisper. “Hilde, live and love again, my dear friend. Please let me live on through you. The evil is purified through you; the babe will be yours in all ways, nothing of Dorothy remains. Raise him well.” He said barely audible and Hilde sobbed and laid her head upon his bare chest.

“Oh Quatre please don't die. Please!” She sobbed; her tears running free to spatter and run like rivulets down his chest. “I will take good care of him, I promise. But Quatre, every child deserves a father. You had better pull through this.” Hilde ordered, hiccupping as the sobs closed her throat and made speech hard to muster.

“Trowa in my place.” Was the breathy whisper as he sank lifeless into the mattress, he was still breathing, but utterly spent as he labored to cling to life.

“That's it Quatre, don't you dare give up! Fight like you have never fought before!” Hilde demanded, rolling off him and forcefully wiping her eyes of tears. “Damn it I don't have time to cry!” She hollered as she raced through her bedroom that still stank of Dorothy's awful perfume as she threw open the window to let in the breeze. She then ran to the bathroom, coming back with a basin and damp cloths.

She washed Quatre's body free of Dorothy's seduction of him, and laid cool rags on his brow. “You just stay here, Prince or no Prince, you will listen to me, do you hear me? If I am going to go through Twelve months, or Nine, or however long a human baby takes to cook, of hell. You are

damn well going to be around to share it with me Quatre Raberba Ibn Winner! You got that?!" Hilde scolded.

Never once had she noticed her reflection in the mirror by the bed, being too wrapped up in caring for Quatre to notice the changes. Dorothy's magenta eyes had softened to the blue of cornflowers, and the long mane of golden hair had turned to twilight hues, and the hard featured face had taken on a softer, gentler mask; Dorothy was indeed no more, Hilde was all that remained.

She was still not as she had been before, her half human side no longer existed in her physical make-up. She was no longer the rather short, petite woman she had been. But tall and graceful as Dorothy's carriage had been. And her hair, even though returned to the midnight shade of Hilde's birth, it was not cropped short as it had been. Long waves of night cascaded like a waterfall down Hilde's back. She was perhaps more beautiful than she had ever been, more beautiful than most women had dreamed of being. The mixture was sublime, and Relena was going to be in for quite a shock.

Hilde never noticed, all she saw was the young man struggling to keep hold of his life, and she was doing all she could to help him. She refused to let Quatre die without a fight.

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Trowa cradled Quatre in his arms brushing his bangs out of his eyes, and running gentle fingertips across Quatre's beautiful face. Drinking in every moment, memorizing every curve, every line, every contour, the color of his skin, the soft pink flesh of his lips, everything being imprinted on his mind for all time.

"Trowa Barton. Please step aside a moment." Came a voice Trowa didn't recognize and his head shot up, and protective arms encircled his love.

There before him stood a woman he didn't recognize, dressed in the green robes of a healer, her shoulder length blonde hair curling up around her chin, and she emanated a sea mist green aura. "Who are you?" Trowa asked and she smiled. That smile he did recognize, Quatre bore that very same smile.

"Iria." He stated and she nodded.

“Yes, told you of me did he?” Iria asked kneeling beside them.

Trowa only nodded.

“Then know I would never hurt my brother. You must give him to me, He cannot wait for help, he needs it now.” Iria said taking her brother in her arms and kissing his brow. “How much you have grown, how proud I am of you. No bigger heart have I ever known.” She said tenderly rocking him in her arms like a babe, as her aura began to expand until Quatre and Iria were shrouded in the brilliant light. “You are needed back with the others Trowa. You must return, the fight is not over. Just believe, let your love be your hope.” Iria said and Trowa shook his head.

“No, I can’t leave him.”

“But you must, this is not the Journey’s end. Meet you there, that was his vow, and the one you returned. Go and complete your journey Trowa Barton, Storm Dancer and Wielder of Nature’s Fury. Believe and the Maker hears and answers.” Iria said cryptically and somehow, Trowa found the strength it took to abandon the care of his heart and soul to the ghost of Quatre’s long dead sister.

He never saw what passed him in the mists of the plain, but Iria looked up and smiled as the mists parted. There in the clearing stood a Maiden in a long white dress, with emerald ribbon trim, white daisy’s adorning her honey colored hair. Beside her a pristine Unicorn, with a golden and shimmering horn, “The true healer and her daughter. Welcome Liah we meet once more.” Iria said and the Unicorn nodded in greeting, the disembodied voice coming from the mystical creature in the mists.

“Well met again Princess Iria. My Daughter Sally.” The voice echoed and Sally nodded, her gaze resting solely on Quatre in deep concern.

The three signatures gathered around the form of the fallen avatar. Liah behind him where he rested against her flanks, her horn dipped low over his heart. While Sally sat to his left and Iria his right and in unison three healers went to work in repairing the critical damage that had been self inflicted during his selfless battle.

All three praying they had enough power to reverse the wounds that would have instantly killed a lesser man.

It would be a long time before they knew for certain if they would succeed, or fail. And it all hinged on Quatre's will to live.

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The Mag'ua'nac Battle formation left the Sank Moon in force, ready to intercept the oncoming fleet of warships headed their way. Four men stood in Mag'ua'nac battle dress beside the leader on the bridge of the Prince's flagship. "Sandrock" in all her glory blazed a trail toward the battlefield, and every occupant on board was ready for the fight. Rashid opened a channel to all the ships, and his image was displayed on every vid screen on every ship. From The Mag'ua'nac grandiose war machines, to the scrap freighters refurbished for battle by small rebel factions from across the galaxy. All those seeking freedom were equal in this army, and Rashid would now speak to them all one last time before battle. Two humans on either side of him, standing tall, standing proud and firm, their faces masks of conviction and a promise to never give up and face the battle before them to the bitter end.

Rashid's booming voice shook the very fabric of space and all ears of every shape and size began to listen.

"This is the time of reckoning, the time of change, the time for peace and justice to reign. Stand you my warriors in honor, fight with your hearts, and your souls. For this is what we gain from victory. Shake off the shackles that seek to bind your hearts in fear, and chain your souls to torment. Stand up for your brothers, your lovers, your fathers and mothers, your children and kin, for all those who will walk in the light you win for them after you.

The future is now, our time is now, follow the beacon your Prince sacrificed himself to buy for you. He has bought with his own blood, sweat, and tears a victory for us all this night. The Witch Dorothy lives no more. The one obstacle barring us from the senate has been lifted by the grace of his highness' love for us all.

**DO NOT LET HIS SACRIFICE BE IN VAIN!**

Fight my brothers and sisters, today is the day we, the people of the United Galaxy Sphere, take

back our homes, and our lives from the hands of a corrupt senate. It is time to take back the control and bring back the democracy we once had before the Oz'rialite Federation took our senate seats from us and forced us all into oppression. We shall be quiet no longer!

OUR VOICES WILL BE HEARD AND OUR BANNERS WILL BE HELD HIGH!

You, our friends and allies, are led this day into the fray by Men who have shown us all that nobility is not a birthright but a title defined and earned by one's actions. Men who have been blessed by the maker himself, but are still men, no different in heart or soul than you or I. Their wisdom, their unity, their bond, and their vow is to stand with us as brothers, to lead you to the future, and to blaze us a trail to victory.

Lord Heero Yuy, our strength of will, Lord Duo Maxwell, the guardian of our souls, Lord Chang Wufei, the wisdom and flame of true justice, and His Highness the Prince Consort Trowa Barton, the Master of the winds of change.

FOLLOW WE THEM TO VICTORY!"

Rashid bellowed and through the coms, cheers and cries of victory were chanted in lust and fervor. Duo turned to Heero. "Jeez, what a pep talk, I almost fell for it too."

"Shut up idiot." Heero hissed under his breath, glaring at his lover. Duo winked and turned to Trowa who looked pained and under pressure. Duo laid a reassuring hand on his forearm.

"He'll be all right Trowa. I believe it with all that I am. He's a lot stronger than he looks." Duo said and Trowa sighed, his eyes still red rimmed, but he held his composure like a rock.

"I just pray it's enough. I pray I am enough. I just want us all to see this through to the end. I don't want to lose anymore. I'm tired of losing." Trowa said heavily and Duo just took his hand and squeezed.

"So are we all. But we have each other now, Like Rashid said, brothers. And from where I come from, Families stick together come hell or high water. I'm here, and will always be here for you." Duo said and Heero stepped forward and laid his hand over Duo's who still gripped Trowa's.

“As I will be here, brother.” Heero stated head held high and proud. No longer ashamed, no longer afraid, and ready to no longer be a slave.

“And me, Brothers.” Wufei added his hand to the mix, his voice firm with conviction.

“For Quatre.” Trowa added and the others answered in kind.

“For Quatre, brother who awaits us at this journey’s end.” Wufei added, with a smile at Trowa. “I believe and I concur with Duo. He is stronger, he will live.”

“I believe.” Heero said and Trowa smiled, a single tear escaping his eye to roll lazily down his cheek.

“I have always believed in him.” Trowa said, his voice soft and sure.

“Then there is no cause to doubt. Faith can move mountains.” Wufei said smiling.

“You honor us all.” Came Rashid’s voice from behind them, his face wracked with emotion. “If I fall this day, I fall with pride in having known you. You have shown me what it is to be true men.” He said lifting up with pride, and almost a fatherly gleam in his eyes.

“Ah man, can the dramatics Rash man! It’s me, DUO, ya know, the guy who fell piss ass drunk into the fountain the night Tro here got him memory back. I’m still just me dude.”

“And hopefully will pick a less bawdy tune to bellow when next you wander drunk into the palace courtyard.” Rashid retorted smiling. “I fear you shocked many a lady that night with such graphic lyrics.”

“Hey, I was drunk. You get whatever tune comes up.” Duo said grinning evilly.

“Oh I do hope so. And first victory round is on me. I’ll teach you proper drinking songs.” Rashid said slapping a paw on Duo’s shoulder.

“Bring it on Rash man. Always wondered if I could drink a Mag’ua’nac under the table. You’re on.” Duo cackled just as the proximity alarms went off. “Looks like the Drinks are on hold. Let’s get the show started!” Duo said cracking his knuckles.

All four men moved to chairs and strapped themselves in, all four linking hands and throwing up shields around their fleet. The battle began here, but would end on the senate floor. They had to reach Demail at all costs, this was only the skirmish before the true battle. The real work still lay ahead, and it was time to plow through this first barrier in the path.

# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Forty

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I'm here for your love and I'll make my stand. We we're born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Warm soft light danced around his senses as he seemed to be suspended on all sides by the mists of the plain, the light refracting in the wisps of clouds, making prismatic patterns on his skin. Here was everything and nothing, the essence of power born, a void in space and time, this was where he belonged, this would be where he would stay.

“Not quite yet.” The mist whispered kissing his cheek. The white smoke forming almost a face before him as it moved and shifted in the phantom winds that stirred the life in the realm.

“I belong here.” He said and another almost face formed.

“Yes you do, but not yet. From here you are born, and here you return. You are one with us, a part of us, but your time to return has not come.” The male and female voices in unison echoed all around him.

The fog that encased him shifting and rolling taking on different shapes and sizes. Some resembled men, some resembled women, some were wholly androgynous as they cradled him and ran wraith like fingers through his hair, down his cheeks, embracing him, and kissing him.

Then the ghost like apparitions seemed to meld and merge and one form stood before Quatre. And it looked exactly like him.

“Who are you?” Quatre asked the nearly transparent twin.

“I am the first. You are part of me.” It answered and Quatre swallowed.

“You hold a part of my eternal soul. You will be my last reincarnation. When you return here again, it will be for good. Our work for the maker will be done and we will pass over.” The spirit said as another seemed to materialize behind him. It was Trowa!

“Yes Quatre. We decided that we wanted to end our service to the maker as we began it. I am Trowa, and he is me, and like wise for you and my Quatre.” The shifting form made of naught but air and water said giving a loving smile to its phantom counterpart.

“Long ago, when man first began to reach for the stars, there was a great war. Man against Man, human against human and it took place in a galaxy far from here. In and around the planet where humans came from, it’s a planet called Earth. Trowa and I fought in that war, we came together during it, and we learned that together we had the power to help end wars. We also made a prayer one night together, when things were looking very bleak on the horizon. So together we sat and looked up at the stars and we promised the heavens, that if they saw fit to see us through to the end, if the maker himself graced us with victory, we would in turn serve him faithfully, no matter what the cost or sacrifice in return.” The first Quatre began and then turned to look at the first Trowa.

“He helped us in more ways than I can possibly begin to name. We did win the war, and Quatre and I grew old together, and when we died, we learned our battles were only just beginning. In our time, we became what Humans then called Arch Angels. We were drafted into the Maker’s army, or what you would say today, we became Avatars to the Creator.” Trowa explained and then his counterpart continued when the current Quatre nodded.

“Every now and again, he would send us back to be reborn, when we were needed to guide his creations in a more physical, hands on manner. Or rather a piece of our souls went back, as you can see we are both here looking at one another.” The first Quatre said laughing. “I’ve been party to this and it still sounds confusing to me. I know how you are feeling.” He added as the confused look contorted the current Quatre’s features. “But I am telling you far too much as it is, just accept the fact you are part of something much greater than you can ever hope to comprehend in your mortal existence. All we are here to do is push you back in the right direction. You’ve come to merge back with me far too soon. This is our last mission for the Maker. We have fulfilled our promise to him in his eyes and he’s giving us our pass into the next world. So when you die, I cross over, the same for Trowa. We get to retire basically.” Quatre said smiling to his mortal self.

“That I can understand.” Quatre said smiling at the ghost, his ghost. It was just too weird.

“Good. So go back before the Trowa on the outside worries himself into a coma.” Quatre teased looking at the spirit Trowa.

"I never worry that much." He protested and the spirit Quatre laughed.

"Liar. But you're so cute when you worry about me."

"I am never cute. You're blowing the image Quatre."

"What image."

"Spiritual Guidance you know. Shove yourself back already and let's go. For crying out loud." Trowa said and Quatre giggled.

"Don't mind Trowa, he's got a rather dry sense of humor. But then you know that already don't you?" Quatre asked his living form.

"That I do. I think I understand. Thank you." Quatre said and his mirror mist self only smiled.

"It's called self preservation." He said with a wink before joining hands with the mirror Trowa and vanishing once more into the void.

"That's it! COME ON QUATRE OPEN YOUR EYES!!!!" Iria ordered and Quatre obeyed.

"Oh thank the Maker." Sally said, her mage signature flickering from exhaustion.

Liah's flanks heaving with exertion as Quatre came back, his glow slowly returning.

"Go young one, go back to your body now. Mesh and you will heal the rest of the way on your own." Liah said turning to her daughter. "As you and I must return to ours before we too perish." She said and Sally nodded hugging Quatre.

“Welcome back. I’m going to plant my foot in your backside when I see you next. The others are on the way back now. They’re going to face Dermail on the Senate floor. The rest of us are going back with Noin, Relena, Catherine, and Mariemaia to your palace to wait for you to come home. Make sure you get there in one piece.” Sally ordered and Quatre smiled.

“I promise, and tell Relena, Hilde lives, but to be prepared. She’s not going to look like she did before. And um, I guess I’ll explain the rest in person when I get there. Let’s just say your little one will have a playmate at least.” Quatre said blushing and Sally’s jaw dropped.

“Oh dear. Yes, I think YOU’D better tell the Princess that.” Sally said kissing Quatre’s cheek. “At least it’s Hilde.” She added and Quatre sighed.

“I shudder to think otherwise. He’s been purified and that was my greatest fear. The nightmare thankfully did not come to pass.” Quatre said as Sally stood.

“Thank the maker who blesses you with such keen acceptance and understanding. Take care Quatre.”

“You too Sally.” He said turning to face the woman behind him who had been sitting quietly. Sally and Liah vanished into the mists.

“Iria.” He sobbed hugging her form tightly. “I missed you.” He whispered into her shoulder.

“I missed you too little brother. I’m so proud of you.” Iria answered in return, her own body succumbing to tears.

“Thank you for your help. I wish I could stay longer with you.” Quatre said and Iria lifted his chin and smiled.

“One day Quatre we’ll be together again. I’m always watching over you. I love you squirt.” She said running soft hands through his thick hair.

“I love you too, and I always hated squirt.”

“I know. Now go on Quatre. I’ll be waiting on the other side.” She said melting into nothingness before his eyes.

“Until then Iria.” Quatre said closing his spirit eyes and willing himself to return to his body. He faded from the plain in much the same manner as his sister.

Quatre opened his eyes to see Hilde curled up beside him on the bed looking exhausted, and beautiful. “At last, a soul worthy of that face.” Quatre sighed smiling. Rolling onto his side and lifting a finger to poke her nose playfully. “Hilde, don’t get used to this, I think Trowa would have a coronary. He hates sharing a bed with me, let alone another.” He teased and Hilde’s eyes flashed open.

“Quatre!” She cried pouncing on him with a fierce hug. “You son of a bitch don’t you ever do something so stupid again you hear me!” She said breaking down into tears.

“I will again if I have to. I have friends I have to protect. One of them carrying my son.” He said and Hilde sat back and punched his arm, REALLY punched his arm.

“OW! What was that for?”

“For giving me a PREGANT BODY! I swear if I go through hell YOU’RE going to go through hell with me!”

“Hell will be telling Trowa and Relena. I think we can make it work though. And don’t blame me, it certainly wasn’t my idea, I really don’t want to think about HOW it happened okay? Let’s agree that if he ever asks how...”

“We did it in a lab. I will never tell him I promise. No child wants to know they were conceived in hate.”

“Thank you Hilde.”

“No thanks necessary. I always did want a baby ya know, So did Lena, we just never got around to it before, and if I’d had a choice, I’m glad it’s yours if that helps.” She said and Quatre smiled.

“Thank you, it does. This child will certainly not lack for parents that for sure, two mothers and two fathers. The only thing I fear now about him is that he’ll be spoiled rotten.” Quatre said laughing and Hilde chuckled.

“Not my son.” Hilde said grinning. Quatre smiled back

“We’ll have to keep our eyes on Trowa then. His bark is far worse than his bite. I have a sneaking feeling a very small finger will have a very large man wrapped around it.”

“Same goes for Lena. She’s a puddle of goo around babies.”

“We will have our hands full then.”

“Sounds like it. We may not be your average family, but then nothing about you is average to begin with. So take my advice. Lay back, rest, and let me get you something to eat. We’ll decide what to do about all of this later.” Hilde said pushing Quatre back into the pillows. “Treize is here, he’ll want to talk with you. The battle has begun.”

“I know. And I need to get all my strength back as fast as I can. They’ll need me.”

“Yes, they will. Praise the maker you live.” Came Treize’s tired voice from the door.

“Forgive the abruptness, but we have only 48 hours till they reach orbit. Here is the plan...” He began as Hilde excused herself to go and get Quatre dinner.

Quatre sat with rapt attention as Treize fed him the details of the battle plan as relayed to him from Rashid.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Forty~One

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I'm here for your love and I'll make my stand. We we're born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

It seemed like years before Rashid barked the all clear and Wufei released his brothers from the continuous power drain he called forth from them. “That is by far easier, when Quatre does it.” Wufei said slumping in his seat. Being the only trained spell weaver it was up to Wufei to orchestrate the shields and navigate a path through the battlefield for their convoy. The others were merely his boost to maintain the shields. Heero's power was face to face and hand to hand, Duo's was not really practical against machines, and no wind blew in the void of space for Trowa to be able to do much good either. His brother's talents all lay on a more personal battlefield.

“Tell me about it Fei. When Quatre touches you it's like a kiss. You punch you bastard.” Duo groaned withering in his seat.

“Sorry.” Wufei said, too tired to argue.

“Don't worry about man. I'd probably feel like I was kicking you all in the jewels.” Duo admitted smiling and patting Wufei's knee reassuringly.

“Not a single loss. Well done my friends.” Rashid beamed at four bone weary young men. “And Abdul managed to jam all communication channels. Demail does not know we are coming. We have our advantage. We'll reach orbit in approximately 38 hours from now. I urge you all to rest.” Rashid said and Duo groaned.

“No urging needed, but you might have to carry us you big lug. Fuck knows my knees are shaking.” Duo said and Rashid chuckled.

“I think I can manage a little help for you my friends.” Rashid said calling over Abdul, and two other Mag'ua'nac warriors to help steady the exhausted quartet.

Abdul moving to pick up Trowa, who raised a tired hand to stall him in his movements “I can stand. Just need something to lean on.” He said and Abdul smiled, giving a hand to Trowa to help steady him on his feet.

“Sir, I’m sorry. There’s an urgent coded signal coming in.” The young communications officer interrupted and Rashid frowned.

“Who from?’ He asked as he leaned over to read the display screen in front of the young officer. “Treize’s signal. Put it on the main screen.” Rashid said just as Abdul and Trowa reached the door. The face however on the main screen was not Treize.

“THE MAKER BE PRAISED!” Rashid bellowed falling to his knees with joy. Abdul turned quickly and Trowa’s head snapped around and the sound of pure and unadulterated joy that escaped from his throat made the other’s turn around and stare at the screen.

“QUATRE!” Trowa sobbed, his strength suddenly improving as he staggered forward toward the screen.

“FUCK YEAH! Q-man!!!” Duo whooped as Heero smiled and sighed with relief.

“I have never been happier to see another’s face in my life.” Wufei said a smile on his lips and tears in his eyes.

“Oh my, you all look terrible. Rest, I can call back.” Quatre began and Trowa growled.

“You most certainly will not pick pocket! Wait until I get my hands on you! You had me worried to death!” Trowa barked and Quatre smiled.

“I love you too.” Quatre teased and Trowa cleared his throat.

“Um, Quatre, you’re on the main view screen. You might want to, ah, you know. Watch what you say.”

“Don’t blow you kisses and talk dirty to you because about eighty people are watching right? Too bad.” Quatre teased with a wink. It was Trowa’s turn to blush.

“Back from the dead and in a saucy mood! THAT’S MY Q-MAN!” Duo chortled rubbing his eyes clear of tears.

“Don’t cheer yet Duo. I may not look it on the outside, but I’m shredded. It’s going to take me the next twenty-four hours in deep meditation to get even half of my strength back. That’s why I had to call, I’m not strong enough to reach even Trowa telepathically right now. But I had to tell you that I’m here. I’m useless, but here.” Quatre said smiling tenderly at the image of Trowa in his monitor.

“I can sleep easy. I still have you, that’s all that matters.” Trowa said wiping those infernal tears off his cheeks, desperately wanting to reach into that screen and clutch that adorable, stubborn, willful, selfless fool close his heart and never let go.

Quatre smiled and sighed. “I know the plan, Treize will get me into the Senate with him, I’ll lay low until you show up, but I’ll be there. Hilde is working on making sure news of your approach gets re-directed. We’ll give you as much cover as we can, and Une is bringing out her private shuttle to rendezvous with you to get you here onto the planet surface. A lot easier than bringing the whole fleet in after all.” Quatre said and Trowa and the others murmured agreements.

“Quatre? How is Hilde? Did everything transfer alright?” Trowa asking with an extremely worried expression, his eyes betraying the unspoken question lingering in his thoughts. Quatre gave him his answer with a weak smile.

“The transfer is complete. It’s all Hilde within, her appearance is altered though, she’s here I’ll let you see for yourself.” Quatre said motioning to Hilde who plopped onto the bed beside Quatre, leaning over his shoulder to grin at the vid screen on his lap.

“Hiya boys!”

“OH MAN! Hubba, Hubba! You look hot!” Duo cat-called whistling through his fingers.

Hilde rolled her eyes. "Well it's nice to be out of YOUR body moron. But thanks; it's going to take some getting used to that's for sure. I can reach the top shelf at last!" Hilde said laughing. Then winked at Trowa, "We'll make it work." She said.

"What the fuck does that mean?" Duo asked looking at Trowa who only seemed to smile lazily.

"I'll explain later." Trowa said as Quatre once more replaced her visage on the screen.

"I have to end this call before they trace it. I'll see you all soon, may the maker see us through to the end." Quatre said and Trowa nodded smiling.

"May he do so indeed, I love you." Trowa said, not caring who heard.

"I love you too. All of you." Quatre said ending the call.

"Man, I'm all choked up." Duo teased poking Trowa's side.

"Shut up Duo." Heero said grabbing the end of his lover's braid.

"Oh! OW! OW! HAIR! HAIR! Man Heero, you're such a killjoy I swear!" Duo mumbled as they all once more began to stumble out to rest, Quatre's survival boosting their spirits enough to manage the trek to their quarters under their own power.

Trowa kicked off his boots and flopped into bed, a wistful semi smile tugging on his lips. "We will make it work, it's Quatre's, I can't help but love it already." Trowa said curling up under his covers, closing his eyes to imagine what this child would look like. This child he would share with his mate, Hilde, and Relena no doubt. Unconventional perhaps, but certainly not unheard of before throughout history, even Abdul had said once there had been Monarchs before Quatre who had sired their heir with a trusted friend to be raised with the true mate. Be it male or just a barren but beloved wife.

If Duo ever found out Trowa was this soft when it came to children, he'd never get a moments rest.

But he always had been for some reason, and this one was more than special, it was partly the embodiment of Quatre, this child would be perfect.

Trowa fell asleep a smile still on his lips as visions of a tiny blonde cherub with Quatre's features and Hilde's ears cooed in his dreams. And it was Hilde he envisioned, as he had seen her, there was enough of the old Dorothy obliterated to rest at ease. He was sure Relena would be overjoyed when she found out, Duo was right, Hilde was positively stunning to look at, made even more beautiful by that vivacious and almost inanely cheerful, and blunt personality. If anyone was going to be the mother of his beloved's heir, he was eternally grateful it was Hilde. This child couldn't help but be wonderful with such a mother and father breathing him life.

He would be perfect.

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Quatre looked at himself in the mirror. "I'm too short, they are not gonna buy this Treize." Quatre said flicking his fake ears and altered eyebrows. "I don't even look like a half breed, let alone an Oz'rialite.

"It's just if someone pulls back the hood of your cloak Quatre. I'm hoping to get in, and get into my council seat section before anyone spots us." Treize said as the transport shuttle hummed to life and they were taken into the heart of the city and to the parliament building.

"How are you feeling by the way?"

"Better than I was. Not a hundred percent though, but I won't be alone and it's not like we have Dorothy to deal with, I'm sure a few fancy parlor tricks will be enough to bully the federation enough to hear our demands. I just hope my speech isn't botched. I'm not accustomed to public speaking." Quatre said and Treize smiled.

"I am however. You just leave the set up to me and follow my cues. I'll be your voice Quatre, you just be you, that's more than enough to win favor with people. Your charm is natural, mine is polished pomp. We'll work together and we'll get our democracy back. There are more than enough delegates here who are just waiting for one of their number to be brave enough to speak up against the Oz'rialite factions. It's time they see Romerfeller and the Alliance cannot dictate laws to suit their own greed any longer." Treize said as the transport halted and they disembarked.

Quatre exited pulling his hood low over his head and following in Treize's wake as a cowed and subservient slave.

Thankfully, they reached Treize's box and Quatre hid himself in the shadows behind the massive Oz'rialite Lord. The moment had come at last; it was all or nothing now.

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"Duo if you don't stop pacing, I'm going to staple your braid to a chair." Wufei grumbled from his seat next to Une as Duo walked in between the small rows of seats repeatedly.

"Bite me 'Fei. I'm worried all right? I mean it's not everyday I wake up and go 'Hey, I think I'm gonna storm the senate today' ya know." Duo said as Heero reached out and snatched a hand and pulled Duo into his lap. Kissing him firmly on the lips before releasing him just as abruptly.

"No, not everyday. Just this once, we'll be fine." Heero said with one of those rare smiles that turned Duo into a puddle.

"You're the one who's 'fine' purrrrrrrrrr." Duo said nipping the end of Heero's nose playfully, but still sat unmoving on Heero's lap. Trowa just smiled and turned to gaze at the stars.

They were so close, just this one last hurdle. They could do it, and then he'd at last be able to finally go home, kick up his feet, hold Quatre in his arms and just live. No more training, no more lonely days and longer nights, no more worrying about Quatre or the others, no more fear.

It was a dream, and he was making it come true with his own two hands. He felt proud for the first time in his life, and he felt it not for himself, but for the unborn babes, Quatre's, Sally's and numerous others who would be born into a world without slavery.

This hope in his chest was a new feeling really; he'd never really held much faith in it in the past.

Quatre had shown him how; Quatre was indeed the light of hope itself.

And what a wonderful beacon he was, and all Trowa's. Trowa had to suppress a feral grin at that thought, Quatre shared his light with the world, but Trowa had Quatre the man, and that light was even brighter to behold, and it was for Trowa's eyes alone.

"This is it gentlemen, we're here." Une said as she pulled the shuttle into her private hanger in the city and four cloaked figures began to make their way towards the senate, following their "mistress" to parliament.

Playing the slave one final time, soon it would all be over.

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# Princes of the Universe

## Chapter Forty~Two & Epilogue

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“Born to be kings, Princes of the universe. Fighting and Free. Got your world in my hand. I'm here for your love and I'll make my stand. We we're born to be Princes of the Universe.”

“Princes of the Universe” ~ Lyrics by Queen

Trowa heaved a sigh of relief when they reached the semi security of Treize's box and saw the small, cloaked form hiding in the shadows. In two strides he had that form securely wrapped in his embrace. “Thank the Maker.” He whispered in hushed tones kissing soft cheeks and lips in grateful release of pent up fear.

Quatre smiled and drank in the positive energy Trowa fed into him spawned by his love. It was a like supping from a fountain of rejuvenation, and Quatre could feel his depleted stores begin to fill once more. “You could make me drunk with the power of your affections alone.” Quatre said brushing that unruly fall of bangs out of Trowa's face.

“And I will do for as long as we live.” Trowa replied resting his forehead against Quatre's and gazing deeply into his eyes. “And I do intend on living beyond this moment. We've come too far to lose now.” He added giving Quatre that rare smile that was reserved for only one pair of eyes to see.

“Amen to that.” Duo said ducking down and scooting in close so they could all squeeze into the box to wait. “Glad to see you again buddy.” He said leaning over to hug Quatre's shoulders.

“Glad to see you too. All of you.” Quatre said as Heero and Wufei settled in as well beside them.

“It's almost time.” Une said as she took her place behind her husband, her hand nervously twisting the fabric of her skirts, otherwise, she was a stone, betraying nothing out of the ordinary.

Silence ensued, the only sounds where the beatings of their own hearts as the blood pounded in their ears. Just waiting and listening until the floor was given to Treize to address the senate, five pairs of hands held tight onto one another, giving silent reassurance that no matter what happened next, they were all in this together.

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Relena looked at her vidscreen in tears, but it was not the tears of sadness that rolled down her cheeks, but rather the tears of joy that cascaded like pearls from azure eyes. "Hilde, I... I...."

"You want to jump my bones?" Hilde asked a mischievous smile on her lips.

Relena laughed as she wiped her eyes. "Now I know without a doubt that's my love looking at me. Hilde you crass, uncouth angel, if I said no would you believe me?"

"Not for a second."

"You know me to well." Relena said smiling and brushing her fingers down the screen to caress the face staring at her. It would take getting used to, but her favorite feature, Hilde's eyes, were gazing at her lovingly. Eyes contained the window to the soul after all, and no matter what the rest looked like, this was the woman who held the keys to Relena's heart and soul. "You have something to tell me, I can see it in your eyes my love." Relena said seeing the hesitation there.

"I do. Are you sitting down?" Hilde said still smiling impishly.

"You can see me Hilde, I am lying down." Relena said cocking an eyebrow in curiosity.

"Do you remember when you said you wished that we could start a family of our own? Well it's not quite going to be just us, but it'll work." Hilde began and Relena sat up straight.

"Hilde! Are you pregnant?" Relena gasped, eyes wide.

"Boy you have a bad habit of RUINING surprises Lena! Yes, it's a long story how. I'll explain later what happened, but for now know it began horribly, but it will end beautifully. Quatre is the Father." Hilde said and Relena broke down into more tears, overcome.

"I heard Sally and Liah talking. I think I know the horrible beginnings. We won't bring them up again. And I suggest the baby never be told." Relena said and Hilde nodded.

"No, Quatre and I already talked a little. We'll tell him it was done in a lab or something if and when he asks." Hilde said and Relena smiled.

"Him, are we having a boy?" Relena asked and Hilde smiled.

"According to Quatre we are. I still can't tell I'm pregnant at all. Quatre freaks me out when he does that, all that 'knowing' stuff. I sure hope the baby doesn't get that from Him." Hilde said laughing.

"He probably will, what with you both having power of sorts. I will be clueless trying to raise a baby with gifts. I think you and I will have to move my love, you carry an heir as well. We'll have to live near Quatre you realize." Relena said and Hilde nodded.

"I know, besides, if this boy does turn out like Papa, we'll need him around to keep him from blowing things up. Think about it, I certainly don't know how to raise a child with talent and power, Quatre and Trowa will however. This baby will certainly not lack for parental guidance. That's for sure." Hilde said giggling.

"How did Trowa take this news?" Relena asked and Hilde smiled.

"According to Quatre he's already picking out baby names."

"And Men call women soft. I draw the line at some Human names. Most I can tolerate, but if they insist on Herbert or something I might have to threaten their manhood." Relena joked and Hilde almost cackled with laughter.

"Oh god... HERBERT? Not my baby."

“At least we agree there.” Relena said as she settled back into her pillows with a sigh of contentment.

“Uh-oh, you have that glazed look Lena. You’re spending money in your head, and lots of it!” Hilde playfully chided and Relena smiled.

“My son deserves the very best. My beloved needs a new maternity wardrobe too. Goodness I cannot wait to see you all full of life. You’re going to be radiant. I must ask Sally if I can touch you, or when I need to stop. And...”

“Lena!” Hilde interrupted laughing. “Oh never mind, there’s no stopping you now anyway. Just try and keep your spending spree REASONABLE!” Hilde chided and then allowed Relena to continue listing all the devices, books, and knickknacks she wanted to acquire to make Hilde’s pregnancy easier. She was a woman obsessed, and Hilde had learned over the years not to try and stop Relena when she decided a shopping binge was in order.

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“The Chair recognizes the Specials and their Senator Treize Khushrenada.” Chancellor Noventa said from his seat and Treize stood and walked to the edge of his balcony box and approached the speech amplifier fixed to the balustrade.

“I bring forth New Business to the senate floor today and call for an immediate vote after it’s presentation. Gathered here today are the delegates from over ten thousand nations and worlds. We here are supposed to represent every facet of life in our galaxy. But in recent millennia’s, the balance of our senate has become tipped and has come to the point where the scale of justice is a mockery when one looks at it angle.” Treize began and gasps and muttering of outrage began to be heard. Treize refused to pause.

“With every turning of the season, yet another world succumbs to either outrageous taxation, or poverty from warfare and siege and is swallowed by the gluttony of this bureaucracy. Still others have never found a voice here on this floor, and not one world has dared offer sanctuary to the pilgrims who arrived in our galaxy over a thousand years ago. Pilgrims who came from a world we had cataloged into our star charts when we visited it during its infancy and pre-history.

Evolution brought these life forms into our democracy, and what did we do? We enslaved them, and tried to crush them to dust. Why? Because someone realized early on, that these relatively small in stature life forms, had potential, great potential and un-wavering courage. Courage is

power, and with that power they had reached out to the stars, not knowing what lay before them but venturing out just for the sheer joy of the search and discovery. I am saddened by the fate that they met when the stars they longed to touch were not as welcoming as the hearts these humans possessed.

But it did not end there, we in our greed went back to their homeland and crushed it, we raped an entire planet of all her people's, her resources, and her pride. Why? Because we were afraid of what they could become given time and opportunity, then we began systematically doing the same thing to weaker systems that already were a part of the republic. Finding weak points and taking advantage of them, knowing full well no one would dare protest in fear of the same travesty happening to their own worlds.

And even the silence did nothing for those deemed weak by those who wanted more. Now look at us, there is only one true voice in this senate, and it is time for those of you too afraid to speak up to speak now. Oz'rialite oppression ends today, it ends right now. Bring our republic back by raising your voice in pride. I call for the vote, to suspend all Oz'rialite rights to trade routes WITHOUT taxation. I call for a vote for a new Chancellor, and I call for a vote to abolish all slaving treaties created by this corrupt senate. I call for a vote to abolish any law made solely for the purpose to profit the Oz'rialite Empire." Treize spoke passionately, and silence met him.

Quatre could taste the fear in the room. And then the laughter began.

"Pretty words Senator Khushrenada, But I myself am a man who constantly thinks of the betterment of less unfortunate worlds. I speak for them." Demail said and Treize snorted.

"You speak for yourself. You speak so you gain at the expense of others you deem not worthy. I am Oz'rialite born and bred and I am ashamed to walk into places like this, knowing how others think of me and what my forefathers did to them. I am a man, no better, no worse, and no more graced under the eyes of the maker than any human man bound in chains of slavery here today. All races were created to be different, but no one race was given the right to claim superiority in the name of the maker as Oz'rialites have done for far too long. And I have brought with me today five men, who HAVE been graced by the maker, who can prove to the entire Senate today the reason men like Demail have decreed that they be kept as slaves and why those who are born with this gift of the maker are killed when the first signs of power are spotted. You have all been deceived and today all eyes will see the truth." Treize said giving the others their cue.

"Guards! Seize Treize's box, he is a traitor!" Demail wailed and Quatre was the first to scramble to his feet and leap up onto the railing of the balcony.

“NO!” Quatre cried raising his hands and the guards charging froze in their tracks.

Wufei was next on his feet and built a wall of fire around the box. It burned nothing but secured their position of safety. Trowa was next and throughout the entire massive room a wind began to blow and all exits and doors slammed shut. Cries of fear began to be heard and Quatre began to speak.

“Do not fear us, we seek not to hurt anyone, we just want to be heard.” He began in that calming soft tenor, his voice full of desperation and compassion.

“We come offering ourselves to you, our fellows who suffer under Oz’rialite rule. My Name is Quatre Raberba Ibn Winner; I was born a Prince and raised a slave. I have lived my whole life in fear. I will fear no more, I will stand up against those who seek to cage me, to kill me, and hold those I love and honor hostage. It is time for men and women of all races who seek peace and understanding to stand up and fight back. Peace is not given to you, it’s something you must sometimes fight to achieve. If someone offers you peace, they also offer you chains. Because it is peace on their terms, not yours. You will be surprised to find that the cost of a cheap peace is also your freedom. My brothers and I have come to you, we do not offer you peace, we offer you our help to gain it, we offer our labor, and our tears, and every resource we have to achieve freedom from oppression. We will help you win it, and we will help you maintain it, but we will not give it to you. You must grasp it with your own two hands!” Quatre began and he felt the first stirrings of hope in the hearts where fear once held it in a vice like grip.

“You! You are a slave, know your place boy!” Demail yelled and Quatre turned an icy glare.

“I know my place, and it is not in the gutter cleaning up your waste. That is where you want me to be, not where I want to be. I want my freedom, I want to walk out in the sun and hold my head up and bask in it’s warmth without having to fear that if I venture out into the world the first person passing by can slap chains on my wrists and sell me to serve another. I have been sold like property, and I belong to no one. I want what Oz’rialites take for granted, but the rest of the galaxy clings to, and hopes for with every breath they take. Freedom to make my own choices, love whom I desire, live where the winds take me, and earn my way by my own merits. Being a slave is an empty existence. Freedom is hardship and paradise, strife and hunger, opulence and feasting. I’d rather have an empty belly and freedom to roam, than sated hunger and a cage.” Quatre said back and the hope grew.

“You will be killed for this mutiny.” Demail hissed and Quatre stood firm.

“So be it. My life is worth Freedom, no price is too much to gain it, and I am not alone feeling this in my heart. There are worlds here who have suffered longer than humans under Oz’rialite rule, others recently brought to their knees, and all of them are tired, and are waiting to be free. You will never crush their spirits, and even if you kill me, others will follow, the desire is there and will never die. Victory WILL come, if not today, but tomorrow, and a million tomorrow’s to follow. I’d rather it be today, I am ready to fight you, today. Face me Demail, prove your superiority to me, show the senate I am but an insignificant human, if you dare.” The Challenge had been made.

Demail visibly paled.

“What’s the matter Demail? Why do you hesitate?” Quatre asked and Demail began to back away.

Trowa was suddenly behind him, Heero by his side. Blocking his retreat from his box. “I think my love just issued you a challenge, I suggest you answer him.” Trowa said moving his fingers and literally blowing Demail back to the edge of his balcony with a gust of wind.

“This is madness! Parlor Tricks!” Demail cried. “They deceive you, they have no power!” Demail raved, grasping at straws. Quatre smiled and stepped over the edge of the railing, and just hovered there, he stood on nothing but air, and then began to walk towards Demail’s balcony, as if on an invisible bridge. Gasps and sounds of disbelief began to be murmured back and forth as Quatre halted before Demail’s box.

He held out his hand. “A trick? If it is a Trick, I am standing on solid ground. Come stand with me Demail.” Quatre said and Demail’s face was ghost white.

“Yeah you sack of horse shit! If Quatre’s a fake you won’t fall. But you won’t will you, cause you know he’s real you bastard!” Duo cat called and Wufei smacked the back of Duo’s head with his staff.

“That’s not helping Maxwell. You just concentrate on keeping those guards immobile.”

“Piece of cake, they all think they’re asleep. And Sorry, I got carried away.”

“Yes, I know. Demail does look about to shit himself.” Wufei said back smiling. Duo grinned.

“Did you just say shit? ‘Bout time you started loosening up buddy.”

“You’re a bad influence.” Was Wufei’s only remark as they turned their attention back to the almost comical scene unfolding on the senate floor. Well, air of the... whatever.

“Enough! This is a mockery! I vote in Favor of Khushrenada! I for one am also tired of Romerfeller and the Alliance. This is not their senate but ours!” One delegate shouted from his seat.

“I second the Motion. We the people of Ac’riba will no longer be silent.” Came another and then another.

“The people of Serris Minor concur. We vote to restore the old Republic.”

“The Gundanium Miners guild concurs. Our trading routes have been taxed to the brink of bankruptcy, and have had all our mines seized by the Alliance! We back Khushrenada!”

“I motion Lord Khushrenada be made new Chancellor of the senate to oversee the changes!” Came Rashid’s booming voice from the Mag’ua’nac seat. Quatre grinned at Demail and the voices continued to rise until it was a blur and almost a chant as the senate began to dissolve.

“Checkmate.” Quatre said and Demail screamed and lunged. Quatre stood back abruptly and Demail toppled over the railing and began to plummet to the floor. Suddenly two wings became visible but semi transparent apparitions on Quatre’s back as he dove to catch the falling Senator. Saving him from death by but a few feet.

“I seek not destruction, nor loss of life. Just acceptance.” Quatre said as he set Demail on his feet.

“I will never bow to a slave.” Demail said reaching for his rapier.

It became a lightening rod as he raised it to strike at Quatre. Trowa sending the blast and stunning Dermail with the electric shock, where he crumpled alive, but beaten on the Senate floor.

“Take the Senator to the infirmary and place him under heavy guard.” Came the voice of Noventa from his seat. “I have seen enough. I am old, and over the years have become blind to the horrors I now see before me. I have seen your point Senator Khushrenada, and I concur. I am no longer affective if I cannot see the problems before our Republic. I step down, and second the motion that you replace me as Chancellor. Fresh Young eyes, to replace these jaded old ones are in order.” Noventa said graciously accepting his defeat and leaving with his dignity in tact.

The cheers that erupted from the senate floor were deafening as Treize nodded his acceptance and stood to address the council. “Then as my first act as Chancellor, I call for the immediate abolishment of Slavery. If you are Rich enough to own slaves, you are rich enough to give them some means of severance. If they choose to remain with you, you will pay them for services rendered with a living wage. This goes for all races currently suffering under the slave laws. Slavers will be compensated by the senate treasury for lost business and aided in seeking new lines of commerce. Do I have all in favor of this new amendment to our laws?”

The resounding “aye” brought Quatre to his knees with tears of joy. Only to be swept off his knees by Trowa who sprinted toward him swinging him around laughing for joy, as he had never seen Trowa laugh before.

“We did it Quatre! We’re free!” He cried as the others joined them on the floor in one crushing hug. All five of them weeping and laughing and reveling in true freedom for the very first time.

And they did it with only two casualties. And even the body of one still lived technically; only the evil entity that had possessed it had been terminated. Life itself had not been lost, but still remained and would remain to live and grow in a brand new world.

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Epilogue:

“Oh man Wufei, your hand is purple!” Duo said to the man standing looking like a drunken buffoon in the doorway.

“Girl.” Was what tumbled out of Wufei’s mouth as he smiled like a giddy fool.

“It’s over? She’s had it? That was fast, she only went into labor an hour ago.” Hilde said grunting to stand as her own distended belly got in her way. Trowa giving her a hand up, patting her belly as he did so.

“Grah! Stop it Trowa. I swear I’m not a dog, you do not have to pet me every time I walk by.” Hilde said moving to walk past Wufei to go see Sally’s baby. Quatre and Relena laughing as they too followed in her wake, her hormones were in rare form since Sally went into labor, and Trowa did not help matters as he continually hovered around Hilde wanting to help.

Peace had finally settled somewhat, there were the occasional problems of a slaver or two not wanting to release his merchandise, and it usually only took Heero and Duo to go out and “liberate” them with a few Mag’ua’nac battle cruisers as back up.

That was something that gave both young men immense pleasure in doing. And it made them feel useful as the official “Preventer’s of Dissention” Officers sanctioned by the New Senate. They made their home however where their hearts were, with the only real family they had ever known.

Thankfully, Quatre just happened to be a King, and had a pretty big house to share. Sally and Wufei had the eastern Wing set up as their sanctuary, and Sally and Liah freely used their gifts now to help others without fears of being killed for possessing the gifts.

Wufei just accepted the fact he was living with two women that drove him insane on a daily basis...

It was now three, but he really didn’t look too displeased as he cradled his daughter in his arms to show her off to his extended family. She was indeed beautiful, and apart from having Sally’s blue eyes, she was Wufei’s spitting image. He looked about to crow like a rooster with pride. Sally looked, far too perky for a woman who had just given birth.

“I’m a healer, I know a few tricks to get it over with fast and as painless as possible.” Was all she said on the matter smiling at Wufei who was currently trying to show Duo the proper way to hold a baby.

The West Wing belonged to the King, and Quatre and Trowa almost immediately upon their arrival back home had taken the vows of joining as was customary on the Desert Moon. Like Catherine and Abdul, when in public both young men wore the banded bracelets proclaiming their union proudly.

Then in a bizarre and unexpected, yet not illegal move, they'd repeated the ceremony with Relena and Hilde. It was a very strange arrangement indeed. They were each husband and wife to one another officially. The sleeping arrangements were still very much boy-boy, girl-girl. But on paper, and where everything else was concerned Quatre had two Wives and One Husband. One King, Two Queens, and a Prince Consort. The Prince Consort was also husband to both Queens, and vice versa, it was downright confusing to read it on paper. It was a living chessboard. But it ensured that the heir Hilde carried could never be considered a bastard, and that was why they all agreed to the rather unorthodox union. Four identical bracelets were made and they wore them proudly in public.

And it really did work. They all lived mainly in the West wing, they ate as a family, traveled as a family, and lived like one, and it was wonderful. They all found something to love about each other and hate about each other as all families do. Trowa and Relena would spend hours gardening together while Hilde and Quatre would sit and watch and heckle their loved ones about dirt under fingernails.

Music time was splendid as Relena also played and would share that talent with her new Husbands while Hilde would sing to the music the three played.

Catherine and Abdul often were in attendance for these nights and the atmosphere was indeed as family should be.

Heero and Duo had the southern Wing to call their own when not out scouring the galaxy on Preventer Business, and would find themselves happiest there and in Heero's tranquil rock gardens he built there just outside their bedroom doors. They too had become unexpected parents when their last mission turned up a derelict slaver freighter full of children, too young to be sold yet. Most of the Mag'ua'nacs had adopted the children outright, eighteen in total, but one who could have been no more than three had instantly melted Duo's heart with her big violet eyes. One look from Heero and he could swear he was seeing Duo as a three year old, he took no convincing, he was a goner the moment she smiled that lopsided grin. This one was coming home with them. They named her Hope.

She was currently propped on Heero's hip as they inspected Wufei's daughter over Duo's

shoulder. Duo was babbling nonsense and just turned to smile at his own family before passing the baby over to Relena for inspection, and more gurgling baby talk.

It was almost a commune in the palace, as individual strangers had come together as a family, and chose to stay that way.

It was what they fought for after all, the freedom to have their families, and live as free men and women.

This was their choice, and their lives, and no one would ever take it from them again.

It was a brand new world, and a world where their children would grow and learn in freedom, and a world those same children would take over one day and keep that way.

The lessons they would teach their children would become the foundation for the new republic, the fighting was over, but unless they raised the next generation to cherish their freedom all could be lost.

What better way to teach the children, than by example? And the more teachers available to them, the better, so together they would stay, together they would live and love, and raise their children. Teaching them the same important values that the new Republic was built on, Peace, Freedom, Love, Compromise, and Understanding all the qualities needed to truly be a Prince or Princess of the Universe.

This room was overflowing with them. And one more had just been added to their ranks, with one more due any day.

Quatre looked around the room and smiled as he felt Trowa's arms slip around him from behind.

"I'm no empath, and even I can feel the love in this room. You must be drunk with it." Trowa said as Quatre leaned back against his chest with a sigh.

“I am. It’s wonderful. We really made it Trowa, It’s almost like a dream.” Quatre sighed and Trowa bent down to kiss his temple.

“I never dreamed anything like this, this is better than a dream. This is real. I love you Quatre, thank you for leading us here.” Trowa said softly and Quatre chuckled.

“This isn’t my doing Trowa. I may have been the one in front of the line. But we all walked the same path together. This is our doing, not yours, not mine, but all of us combined. Everyone in this room had their part to play, everyone did their best, and we’re here now, because we believed in each other. “ Quatre said turning to look up into misted over green eyes.

“I will always believe in you.” Trowa said with a tender smile.

“And I you.” Quatre replied as their lips met and tasted naught but joy.

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**THE END**