

# Stray Cats

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Trowa set the small bowl in his hands on the floor of his balcony and within mere moments two small, non-descript, gray and black mottled cats descended down the fire escape to devour his offerings. “If you keep feeding them, they aren’t going to go away Mr. Barton.” His neighbor, Ms. Peachtree, said as she stood on her balcony watering her small private jungle of plants.

She was a divorcee in her early fifties. Quite affluent and content with her life, and obsessed with being a mother figure to her quiet young neighbor.

“The way you take in strays, you’re going to wind up old, alone in a house with fifty cats, whom you’ll leave everything to in your will.” She continued teasing and with a smile. “You’re too young for this nonsense. It’s Friday night for goodness sakes, go out on a date once in a while.” She said setting her watering can down and pulling out a cigarette, the flicker of her lighter lighting up her concerned eyes as she stood looking at Trowa, waiting for his retort.

Trowa just sighed and picked up one of the cats to scratch behind ears. The soft purr of contentment a soothing balm to Trowa’s loneliness. “If it were as easy as that Mae, I’d be out now.”

“You’re too picky.”

“No I’m not. It’s not my fault everyone I meet is either all looks and no brains, or so intelligent they become a sleeping pill of dull, over my head, conversation.” Trowa sighed leaning against the railing of his balcony.

He had a very nice apartment, on the upper west side of the city. It was more of a luxury penthouse than an apartment. It was vast and spacious and it had rooms bare to the walls because he had absolutely nothing to put in them. He had furnished the living room, his bedroom, His art studio, and the kitchen. Everything else was bare to the carpet. He had no guests and no family other than his sister who refused to come to the city. So visits were spent with Trowa traveling to the farm he grew up on to visit her.

All he had was Mae Peachtree, and the stray cats that he fed to worry about him.

“Trowa, you’re perhaps one of the most intelligent men I’ve ever met. You have a gift of expression that’s stunning and filled with passion. And I know art, your works are not pieces of crap a toddler with finger-paint could accomplish. You don’t raid the junkyard, tie some old broken TV sets together and call it art. You’re a traditionalist, when I look at your works, I swear, I feel I can almost touch heaven. I’m moved. Like I am if I am looking at a piece of your very soul.” Mae said the smoke from her cigarette ringing her head like a halo.

“A soul I’m worried about. You devote your entire being into your works, and I can see how lonely you are. I can only imagine how your art will grow when you find what you’re looking for.” She said meeting Trowa’s eyes in a motherly fashion. “But you actually have to leave this apartment to find it Trowa Barton. Just going to the gallery and back by cab does not count. Try walking there next time, look around you as you go. You just might find it if you look hard enough.” Mae added in almost a command then turning away, she went inside. Leaving Trowa to consider her words as he idly stroked the cats now curled up in his lap.

One looked up, its eyes glazed with contentment as Trowa scratched behind its ears. Its gaze almost saying. “She’s right ya know, but look tomorrow, rub me now.”

Trowa chuckled. “Okay, I’ll walk to the gallery tomorrow. Happy?” He asked the cat who just shut her eyes and went to sleep on Trowa’s lap. “I’ll take that as a yes.” He said settling down to gaze up at the stars, the warmth of two cats he’d yet to name, nestled into his lap.

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Trowa suddenly remembered why he never walked anywhere in the city. People bumping into him, stepping on his feet, the noise, the smell, all of it a dirty reminder that there were far too many people trying to cram themselves into too little an area.

He’d been to the gallery, picked up his check from them for his sales and left. That was an hour ago. It was lunch time, and the streets were packed with women in dresses and sneakers, men elbowing him in the chest as they held cell phones to their ears. And Trowa was about two seconds away from growling and ripping someone’s head off with his bare hands when the sound of a violin arrested his attention. Almost immediately washing away all his tension and irritability.

The music was soft and sublime, an almost eerily mystical melody barely able to be discerned from the hustle and bustle of traffic in general. Trowa paused and tried to gauge where the sound was coming from, and found it. Next to an alley, stood a young man, a street musician, who’s case lay open and sadly empty at his feet. His eyes were shut, lost in the music that poured out from his very soul.

Trowa was mesmerized and pushed his way through the crowd to stand before the young man and just listen. And the closer he moved toward his goal, the more enchanting the whole scene became. The musician looked to be in his either very late teens or early twenties. It was hard to tell, he had a deceptively innocent, near angelic appearance. Round cherubic features that usually did well to mask the true age of anyone so blessed with a similar countenance.

His hair, reflecting the noon sun was a brilliant blonde, almost blindingly bright as it captured the light and cast it of again. His slight build, swaying softly to the music, while his fingers danced across the strings. Trowa stood

transfixed, captured by this unearthly presence before him. The young man seemed to be far away, in a world of his own creation and Trowa was only being allowed a glimpse through the shroud that surrounded that world.

But the closer he looked; the reality began to pervade the scene. The empty case, devoid of money, held but dingy, red crushed velvet lining, and a well used cake of hard rosin. Moving from the case, he noticed the shoes, scuffed and worn. With broken shoelaces, tied in knots to hold the severed bits together. The rough hem coming undone from his trousers with knees almost transparent they were so thread bare.

A length of rope used as a belt that held the pants in place. The overly large sweatshirt with a broken zipper going up the front, the flannel underneath that, was missing a few buttons, and the blue t-shirt underneath that was coming apart at the collar seam.

His fingers, calloused pads, with chewed sort fingernails, and a small bruise just underneath his right eye, old and faded, but still evidence that life was not as beautiful for this musician as his music belied.

“Do you have any requests?” Came the understated tenor, almost as if the voice was part of the instrument and not the man.

It snapped Trowa out of his scrutinizing stupor. “Pardon?”

“I asked if you had any requests. You’ve been standing there a while now. You seem to like my music.” The youth said again, his eyes opening slowly to gaze into Trowa’s. He looked over his instrument, never ceasing his song, and Trowa felt nailed to the ground where he stood as the siren turned him to stone with his pale eyes. Not quite blue, not quite green. A mix of those hues swirling together in soft splendor, under dark blonde, long lashes, and gently arched pale brows. Eyes that were waiting for an answer.

“No requests. Just play.” Trowa managed to breathe out and those eyes shut once more, gutting Trowa with the loss.

The song shifted into a new stanza, bright and lively. Like water cascading over rocks, or rain tumbling through the branches of a tree. It was the promise of spring, of life, of a rainbow on the horizon about to burst free from the darkness. It was the dreams of a little girl after hearing her first faerie tale. That sang of her hope that she too could grow up to be a princess. It was the pride of a small boy who had just caught his very first frog. It was the innocence of un-jaded youth, of hope unchallenged.

Trowa sat on a small crate nearby, propping his elbow on his knee and his chin in his hand as he was once more swept away with the imagery the music painted in his minds eye.

“What’s the name of this song?” Trowa asked as the bow was pulled across the strings one final time.

“It has no name.” Was the answer as the young man lowered the instrument from his chin and took a deep breath as he straightened and once more gifted Trowa with a view of his beautiful eyes, such sorrow contained in their depths in comparison to the jubilant joy of life that had fallen from his fingertips.

“Who wrote it?” Trowa asked as he stood.

“No one of note.” Was the strange reply. This youth was a walking contradiction and Trowa was intrigued.

The youth looked forlornly down to his empty case and squatted to replace his instrument and bow. Laying it reverently within it’s battered home and closing the lid with care. Picking it up as he ran a shaking hand through his blonde hair, the youth turned his gaze once more to Trowa and the strain of life in general seemed to weigh heavily upon his shoulders. Trembling shoulders at that, Trowa noticed suddenly.

Now that the spell was broken, he saw with a start that the entire body of the young man before him was quaking with tremors.

“No, I’m not a drug addict. Stop looking at me like that.” The youth said almost angrily as he stood clutching his case to his chest. “I’m Hypoglycemic.” He said turning away.

“No, I wasn’t thinking that at all. I was just noticing you’re shaking is all. Can I buy you lunch or something? That performance you gave me is worth more than a few measly bucks in my opinion.” Trowa said and the youth turned back, a soft smile on his lips.

“That would be nice. Thank you.” He replied and Trowa smiled and held out his hand.

“Trowa Barton.” He said as the youth took his offered hand in greeting.

“Quatre.” The youth replied shaking Trowa’s hand once before shyly removing his hand and moving it back around his case that he held like a shield or a lover against his torso.

“Quatre what?” Trowa asked even more intrigued by the evasive young man.

“Just Quatre is fine.” He said turning to face the street. “There’s a hot dog vendor one block over I think.” Quatre said a Trowa shook his head.

“It’s worth more than a few bucks I said, and most definitely worth more than a hot dog. I was heading to lunch myself when you waylaid me with song. Come with me, you like Italian?” Trowa asked as they began walking. Quatre nodded.

“Good. Because there’s this little café just around the corner that makes the best manicotti on the planet.” Trowa said as they made their way down the street toward Trowa’s favorite haunt for lunch.

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Trowa noticed Quatre reticence to actually walk inside the restaurant so opted for one of the outside tables, which had the requisite red and white checked tablecloth and hard breadsticks lying in a basket on the table. Trowa directed Quatre to a chair as he went to grab a couple of menus. Out the corner of his eye Trowa watched Quatre hungrily devour a breadstick, his hands were shaking even worse than before.

Then to his horror, one of the waitresses walked over to Quatre, and said something he couldn’t hear. Quatre just bowed his head and began to stand up to leave. Trowa hastened back over to the table. “What’s going on here?” He asked standing behind Quatre and placing a hand on his shoulder.

“Mr. Barton, is he with you?” The waitress asked and Trowa glowered.

“Yes, but that’s beside the point. Why did you ask him to leave?” Trowa asked and the waitress shifted nervously on her feet.

“Don’t. Please. You know why she asked. It’s not her fault, she’s doing her job.” Quatre said his voice tinged with shame.

“That’s called discrimination Quatre and against the law. So you’re not exactly dressed in the nicest attire, I’ve seen worse on the rich brat teenage children of this city. Only for them it’s called style. Sit down.” Trowa said guiding Quatre back into his seat and handing him a menu. “And you, bring him whatever he wants. He is my guest.” Trowa said and the waitress nodded.

“Something to drink sir?” She asked looking at Quatre, the sir dripping off her tongue almost like an insult.

“Just water is fine.” Quatre said humbly looking at the menu in his hands and gaping at the prices.

“I said anything you want Quatre, I meant it.” Trowa said and Quatre looked up briefly and nodded.

“A coke please?” He asked not the waitress, but Trowa.

“Make that two cokes.” Trowa said and the waitress went off to bring them their drinks. He smiled at Quatre and then reached out and took the menu out of Quatre hands. “I think I’ll read you the choices. I know damn well if I let you look at this you’re only going to look at the prices and not what you want.” Trowa added and Quatre slightly blushed and sank into his seat.

“That obvious?” Quatre asked and Trowa nodded.

“Yes. But nothing to be ashamed about Quatre, I want you not to think about anything but what you want. If you don’t I’ll just order the most expensive thing out of spite.” Trowa said and Quatre laughed softly in his seat.

“You would too wouldn’t you?” Quatre asked and Trowa smiled.

“Try me.” Was Trowa’s mock threat as he began reading the menu to Quatre and giving culinary reviews of what was good and what wasn’t as they went down the list.

Quatre was munching on another breadstick, listening to Trowa’s recital of the menu when the waitress returned with their drinks.

“Ready to Order Mr. Barton?” she asked bringing out her pad.

“Quatre?” Trowa asked and Quatre sighed.

“All of it sounded good. But you raved about the Manicotti so I’ll try that.” Quatre said and Trowa smiled.

“Make that two.” Trowa said handing the waitress the menus smiling at Quatre. “It is the best in the city.” Trowa added watching with disguised concern as he watched Quatre lift his glass and almost spill his drink. His hands were still shaking horribly.

“Do you need something? I hate to pry Quatre, but I’ve known Diabetics to get the shakes and they need insulin.” Trowa said and Quatre placed his hand under the table out of sight.

“I’ll be fine after I eat. It’s all right.” Quatre said purposefully looking anywhere and everywhere as not to meet Trowa’s face.

Trowa was not going to let this rest. “When was the last time you ate Quatre?” He asked and Quatre shrugged.

“Yesterday, I think.” Quatre mumbled and Trowa frowned.

“You think? What sort of an answer is that?” Trowa asked and Quatre did look at him now, and the devastation in his eyes hit Trowa in the pit of his stomach as if he had been punched.

“An honest one. Please can we not talk about me?” Quatre asked and Trowa nodded, he knew pride, how ever feeble, when he saw it.

“All right. Can I ask at least where you learned to play like that?” Trowa asked and Quatre smiled and nodded.

“I’ve always played. Since I was a boy. I went to the conservatory of music for a couple of years after I graduated high school.” Quatre said taking another sip of his soda.

“Really? You don’t look old enough.” Trowa mused and Quatre frowned.

“I know. I’m Twenty-three.” Quatre said and it was Trowa’s turn to look stunned.

“Get out. I was guessing twenty tops.” Trowa said and Quatre laughed.

“I hate having a baby face. I’ll be twenty-four in January. What about you?” Quatre said chewing on another

breadstick.

“Twenty-six going on forty.” Trowa said rolling his eyes. Quatre laughed.

“Well you look good for forty.” Quatre said smiling over his glass.

“For now. I’ll probably be bald with a comb-over by then. You on the other hand will be grateful for the baby face.” Trowa said grinning and Quatre almost snorted soda out of his nose, and began coughing, Trowa reaching over and patting his back as he choked on his drink.

“A comb over? Please don’t paint those sort of images in my head while I’m drinking.” Quatre sputtered wiping his chin with his napkin. His eyes were dancing with mirth. Trowa was lost again, this time in sheer admiration of beauty. Nothing he had ever seen could compare to Quatre when he was a glow with laughter.

“What?” Quatre asked looking behind his chair trying to figure out what Trowa was staring at.

“Nothing, you’re just radiant is all. I’d love to paint you.” Trowa said and Quatre’s eyes widened.

“No, it’s not what you’re thinking Quatre. I’m not some lascivious bastard out to take advantage of you. I’m serious though. I am an artist, would you mind if I came to listen to you play again tomorrow with my sketch pad?” Trowa asked and Quatre smiled.

“If you want to. It’s nice to actually have someone listen for a change.” Quatre said as their food arrived and conversation was suspended momentarily in favor of food.

Quatre had really been hungry Trowa noted as Quatre bent over his plate and never looked up from it as he set about inhaling his meal.

“I’m going to explode.” Quatre moaned with a sated grin on his face as he set his fork down on his now empty plate.

“Ditto.” Trowa said with an echo of Quatre’s groan, leaning back in his chair.

“Thank you very much for this, I really appreciate it.” Quatre said and Trowa smiled.

“Nope, thanks go to you. I was in a right surly mood until I heard you playing. This was the least I could do.” Trowa said as the waitress came by with the check.

Quatre’s radiance dimmed and he shifted in his chair. “Well, I guess I’ve taken up too much of your time. I should let you get back to your business.” Quatre said moving to get up and Trowa’s hand clasped Quatre’s wrist.

“I make my own hours. But unless you’re in a hurry to see me gone you don’t need to rush off.” Trowa said and he could almost feel Quatre’s pulse quicken under his fingers.

Quatre hesitated, but returned to his seat. Tears began to silently slip down his cheeks, his head was bowed and his long bangs obscured his eyes. “Quatre? What’s wrong?” Trowa asked reaching over with a clean napkin, Quatre took it and wiped his eyes.

“It’s just... You’re so... so... confusing.” Quatre said wiping his eyes and looking up at Trowa.

“Why do you care about a nobody like me? I don’t get you. Nobody I know, or have ever known, does nice things without wanting something in return. I don’t mean to sound ungrateful, because I’m not. What do you want? Really?” Quatre asked, fear in his eyes.

Trowa sighed “Bastards.” Trowa growled. And Quatre shrank into his seat. “This whole damn world is filled with bastards. I don’t want anything Quatre. Not everybody is like the prick who put that bruise on your cheek.” Trowa said and Quatre’s hand instantly covered his right cheek.

“Don’t Quatre. Don’t cover it up damn it!” Trowa said pinning Quatre to his chair with his eyes.

“No one has the right to treat you like shit. No matter who they THINK they are. We all got here on this earth the same way, two people fucked, and some woman squatted somewhere and pushed. Rich or poor it’s a fact and an ugly one at that, but most things regarding human nature are ugly, Shitting, sneezing, vomiting, sex, all of it, and we all do it. Ugly or not its part of being human. Just because one wallet is empty and another full does not give somebody the right to treat you any less than an equal, than a human being.” Trowa said angrily slamming his hand down on the table.

“Hell, most humans cannot do what you can do. The beauty you give others with your music raises you up a notch on the human ladder of success in my book. It takes some of that ugliness away for a while. You’re a gift Quatre and don’t let anyone tell you anything different. Fuck them, they are only trying to drag you back down to

their level.” Trowa added and Quatre sat, unable to move. Trowa had him terrified and elated all at once.

His mind began to whirl; it was too much, all at once. He couldn't decide whether he loved or hated Trowa. This handsome, verbally violent, passionate creature was the goodness of the soul, mixed with the evil of man's anger. The emotions of bitter hatred towards men in general rolling off him in waves, yet at the same time, his compassion and concern for a total stranger came shining through like a candle in the dark. Quatre felt dizzy, and swept away. And very literally, passed out.

Trowa knew instantly when Quatre began to crumble he'd gone too far. He caught Quatre before he could fall out his chair. He'd just assaulted Quatre's system. With rich food he wasn't used to, and then with his emotional outburst. “I'm a jackass who managed to hurt you too.” Trowa said brushing Quatre's bangs out his face as eyelids began to flutter.

“Quatre, I'm so sorry.” Trowa said almost whispering.

“No, it's all right. I'm just tired and you shocked me is all.” Quatre said sitting up and shoving his bangs out of his face. Trowa reached out snatching his hand.

“You're still shaking. I thought you said you'd be all right. And your fingers are like ice and it's eighty degrees out here today. I think you should go to the hospital.” Trowa said and Quatre ripped his hand out of Trowa's.

“I CAN'T! Don't you get it Trowa? I'm homeless, I live in an alley, and I drink out of public fountains in the park. I eat out of dumpsters. I can't afford to go to the hospital. I can't afford a pair of shoes let alone a medical bill.” Quatre sobbed grabbing his violin case. “This is all I have, without this I would be even worse off than I am now. I got you to feed me today. Tomorrow somebody may give me a buck and I can buy a hot dog to get me through another day. The day after that who knows, I try not to think that far ahead.” Quatre said squaring his shoulders with whatever pride he had left.

“This bruise, wanna know how I got it? Do you?” Quatre asked and Trowa still kneeling on the ground couldn't even shake his head no he was so flabbergasted. So Quatre continued.

“I got it because even with the HELL I live in, I won't resort to sucking some rich guys dick for money. So he beat the shit out of me, and would have done more had the cops not shown up. I do have a little pride in myself Trowa. I didn't let him hit me. But LOOK AT ME! I'm not the quarterback for the broncos here! It doesn't take a whole hell of a lot to overpower me.” Quatre yelled picking up his case and turning away.

“You don't have to tell me Mankind is ugly, I know it is. I'm just as ugly. You're the one exception Trowa, you care even when you preach that you don't. Because you have a heart in there somewhere that gives a damn about some homeless guy you met on the street. Me? I don't care, not anymore. I create my own reality; I make my

own world to live in since this one has left me cold. You want to know who wrote that song? I did. Welcome to my world Trowa.” Quatre said moving to leave but was stopped as two arms encircled him from behind and just held him.

“Don’t go Quatre. I’m so sorry.” Trowa said and Quatre sighed.

“You have no need to be sorry Trowa. It’s not your fault I am where I am today. It’s mine, I’m stubborn, and couldn’t swallow my pride when it mattered. So here I am, still too damn stubborn to admit defeat and curl up and die somewhere.” Quatre said and Trowa held tighter.

“And it makes you even more beautiful. It makes you perhaps the strongest person I know.” Trowa said and turned Quatre around to face him. “I’m humbled by you. All my life I’ve been running from problems, from people. And here you are facing the world head on with no apologies. It’s time I stop running and time for you to stop fighting. Come with me.” Trowa said and Quatre blinked.

“What?”

“Come with me, let me help you get on your feet Quatre. I have a room with your name on it if you want it. In return all I ask is you show me your world again and teach me how to live in it.” Trowa asked taking Quatre’s hand.

“And let me take you to see a doctor. I want to help you Quatre.” Trowa said sincerely and Quatre nodded.

“I have a feeling I am never going to be able to tell you no.” Quatre said resigning his fate into Trowa’s hands. He could see the sincerity in Trowa’s eyes, and could feel his emotions seep under his skin with a warmth that Quatre had never felt before.

It was time to take one more chance and pray it all turned out for the best. Maybe fate brought them together, or something else. But whatever it was, it was urging them to at least try.

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They stopped at Trowa’s physician first, and both were relieved that the shaking was due to Quatre’s erratic diet and the violent ups and downs of his blood sugar levels. The doctor prescribed a daily pill to help regulate his levels and a strict diet. From there they filled Quatre’s prescription on the walk back to Trowa’s apartment.

Once inside Trowa led Quatre to one of the spare rooms. "This is yours, I'll get you a bed tomorrow. For tonight you can sleep in my bed, I'll take the couch." Trowa began and Quatre spun around to face him.

"No! Don't be silly, this is GRAND!" Quatre said laughing and spinning around the room. "I'm used to sleeping on Pavement Trowa, the carpet is going to feel like a feather bead in comparison." Quatre said almost giddy.

Trowa shook his head. "So think what a real bed will feel like. Until those pills kick in, I want you in a bed." Trowa said walking across the room and opening a door. "This will be your bathroom, I have some extra bottles of shampoo and soap in the linen closet here in the hall. Help yourself. I have to call my agent; he's been paging me for about an hour now. So feel free to freshen up while I attend to the nag." Trowa said and Quatre smiled.

"Thank you, I'd like a bath actually, it's been a long time." Quatre said and Trowa nodded smiling.

"Take your time, enjoy it. I'll be in my studio when you're finished. Down the hall, last door on the right." Trowa said shutting the door to give Quatre some privacy.

Quatre shed his clothes like a snake did its skin and dashed into the bathroom. Letting the hot water fill the tub to almost a scalding temperature as he climbed in sighing.

He scrubbed until his skin was red and almost raw, but it felt so good to be totally clean. He must have washed his hair a dozen times just for the sheer joy of it. It was at least an hour before he reluctantly pulled the plug in the drain and got out to dry off. When he walked back into his room wrapped in towels he noticed a pair of sweat pants and a sweatshirt folded on the floor with a note. "I figured you'd want something fresh. And well, these will probably be too big, but the pants do have a drawstring at least. ~Trowa."

Quatre grinned and lifted the clothes that obviously came from Trowa's closet. "It's not the waist that's a problem, Mr. long legs. Holy moly." Quatre said rolling the ends of the pants several turns. Trowa was slender and only marginally larger around the waist. But his legs were far and away longer than Quatre's. Quatre laughed at his image in the mirrored closet doors. He looked like a drowned cat in a sack. But he felt wonderful and the pills were starting to work, he wasn't shaking anymore.

So he made his way towards Trowa's studio, finger combing the snarls out of his wet hair. He spied Trowa out on the balcony feeding a pair of young cats. Quatre smiled as he stepped toward the sliding glass door. "Friends of yours?" He asked as one of the cats rubbed up against his leg. Quatre knelt to scratch behind its ears.

"I have a soft spot for strays." Trowa said and Quatre looked up and grinned.

“So I guessed. Stray Cat, Stray Quatre, what’s in a syllable?” Quatre said and Trowa stammered and coughed.

“That’s not what I meant.” Trowa tried again and Quatre laughed.

“I was teasing. I know.” Quatre said smiling up at Trowa.

“That’s a relief.” Trowa said moving inside and disappearing out of the room for a moment before returning with a comb and some scissors. “Okay, outside for a minute Shaggy. You look like a sheepdog.” Trowa said Quatre chuckled.

“Look who’s talking shaggy.” Quatre replied slapping Trowa’s bangs out of his own eyes.

“It’s a lost cause my hair. If it’s shorter than this it stands straight up on end. I am the poster boy for bad hair days.” Trowa said sitting Quatre on a stool and moving around to comb and trim his hair.

“You however, have great hair. I’m only going to get it out of your eyes, it looks good a little long.” Trowa said running the comb through Quatre’s hair.

A few snips was all it took to clean up the frazzled ends and if he had thought Quatre beautiful before, he was positively gorgeous now.

“I feel human again, thank you.” Quatre said turning away from his reflection in the glass door to look up at Trowa.

“Well you certainly don’t look it. Humans do not look as good as you do. I have to draw you Quatre.” Trowa said dashing inside to grab his pad and pencil, Quatre following him inside and shutting the door behind him as he watched Trowa frantically pulling out various pencils from a cup on his desk in search of the perfect one.

“Where do you want me?” Quatre asked and Trowa smiled. That was a very loaded question. Truth be told, Trowa wanted Quatre naked on his bed, but that was pushing things a bit far. In sweats on the sofa would have to suffice for now.

“There on the couch is good. Just lay down as you would if you were going to sleep.” Trowa said and Quatre complied, lying on his stomach, his cheek resting on his hands.

“This is how I sleep, is this what you want?”

“Perfect.” Trowa said smiling at the almost innocent look Quatre had about him. An Angel in repose, Trowa mused as he sketched, adding angel wings to the sketch as he drew.

But it was hard to get Quatre’s chest proportions right with that damn bulky sweatshirt in the way. “Quatre? Feel free to say no if you’re uncomfortable at all about this request. But, well here let me show you what I’m doing and why I need you take your shirt off.” Trowa said leaning over to show Quatre the sketch.

Quatre’s eyes went wide. “That beautiful, but since when do I have wings?”

“Artistic license. But as you can see, I’m having trouble envisioning your torso through that shirt. Would you mind?”

“Not at all.” Quatre said sitting up to take off his shirt

Trowa’s throat went dry; Quatre was smooth as satin, ivory pale with small pink nipples that became hard with the sudden brush of the air conditioning. “Trowa? Earth to Trowa? What’s wrong?” Quatre asked as Trowa sat there staring.

“Absolutely nothing wrong. I’m just worried about doing you justice.” Trowa said and Quatre chuckled.

“Careful, you’ll give me a complex Trowa. You’re all ready making me an angel, that’s about as far from the truth as you can get.” Quatre said and Trowa smiled.

“Like I said Artistic License. Now hush or I’ll make you loose the pants too.” Trowa said in jest and was shocked to the point of speechlessness as Quatre stood, dropped his pants, then laid back down on his stomach.

“Still an Angel?” Quatre asked, a small smirk on his lips.

“Oh no, not anymore. I’m looking at a god.” Trowa said desperately trying to maintain composure as the temperature in the room began rising by degrees despite the air conditioning.

“You look flustered.” Quatre said, his voice almost sultry.

Trowa tugged his tie off. “It’s warm in here.”

“Is it? I haven’t noticed. I’m quite comfortable.” Quatre said stretching limbs languidly.

Trowa unbuttoned the top few buttons on his shirt. He was praying he was being seduced.

“Maybe it’s too warm over there. Perhaps if you come closer?” Quatre said eyes shut, cheek resting against the cushions of the sofa in the pose he’d adopted previously clothed.

“If I come any closer, I fear your virtue may be in jeopardy.” Trowa drawled, voice heavy and low with lust.

Quatre opened his eyes, and just like before, medusa captured her prey. “Oh good.”

That was it, pad and pencil landed with a thud on the floor as Trowa dove for the sofa, crushing Quatre’s lips in a kiss.

Buttons popped and went flying and Trowa tore his clothes off in order to get closer to Quatre’s flesh.

Breath hissed through teeth as both men clawed at each other in lonely desperation. A fragile emotional connection made earlier only heightened the mutual attractions they’d been harboring all day for one another.

One thing had led to another and hormones took control. Testosterone boiled and erupted and they tumbled to the floor pawing and clawing at one another. “Not here, not on the floor.” Trowa said grabbing Quatre and throwing him over a shoulder.

“WAH! TROWA! Put me down!” Quatre laughed but didn’t mind the view he was getting of Trowa’s bare behind in this position.

“Now, I’ll put you down.” Trowa said flopping Quatre onto the bed then straddling him. “I never intended this, honest.” Trowa said and Quatre smiled.

“I know.” Quatre said pulling Trowa down to kiss him. A kiss which brought the fire between them back and fumbling for his nightstand, Trowa grabbed the necessary tube from within its dusty confines and prepared them both for the joining.

Which was sublime as Trowa claimed his new lover, who claimed him in return as he swiftly kicked and shifted, sending Trowa to his back.

Quatre bent over to kiss him deeply as he began to move, taking Trowa in and out making love to Trowa as much as Trowa was making love to him.

They almost made an adventure out of vying for dominance as they changed positions several times. It was the joy of sex, the thrill of taking a new lover, and of exploring the boundaries.

But well before either of them were tired of the game, their bodies grew tired and spent, and both collapsed in the destroyed sheets of Trowa’s bed. Half the fitted sheet pulled off the corners, the flat sheet lost somewhere to the side, and the comforter flung across the room.

“Good God Quatre, I have never just had sex like that in my life. God it was good.” Trowa heaved to breathe and Quatre chuckled beside him, face down in a pillow.

“Amen. I’ve had a crush on you all day. I couldn’t help it, you have no idea how sexy you are, I became possessed. I don’t make a habit out of seducing strangers.” Quatre said and Trowa smiled and rolled over to face him.

“I can tell. And you will not hear me complaining that you chose me to seduce. I’ve been enamored with you since, well since I first laid eyes on you.” Trowa said and Quatre crawled into his arms.

“I know. Your eyes gave you away Trowa. Thank you, for everything.” Quatre sighed and Trowa held him close.

“Thank you Quatre. I’ve felt so dead inside for a very long time. Thank you for allowing me to feel again.” Trowa said and Quatre wrapped his arms around Trowa and held tight.

“Well we could lay here all night thanking each other, or we can just agree that together we have a lot of flaws, but together we can work through them.” Quatre said and Trowa smiled.

“I couldn’t have said that better if I tried. I also have the munchies now, care to raid the fridge with me naked?” Trowa asked and Quatre grinned.

“Oh, what a good idea.” Quatre said grinning with evil intent. “Trowa ala mode sounds divine.”

“Quatre, you are one of a kind.” Trowa mumbled laughing as they both stumbled on weak knees to the kitchen.

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It was later that night, and after another round of play and after Quatre had fallen asleep that Trowa went out for a bit of fresh air on the balcony.

“Now there’s that smile I was hoping to see Trowa. He’s cute too. Meet him on the walk today hummmmm?”

“Mae, that’s the best bit of advice you ever gave me. He’s wonderful, I’ll introduce you to him later. He’s sleeping.” Trowa said and Mae smiled.

“I already know Quatre.” She said and Trowa spun around eyes wide.

“WHAT?”

“You heard me Trowa. Did he tell you his last name?” She asked and Trowa realized that no, Quatre never had told him.

“His name is Quatre Raberba Winner. Son of the multi-billionaire ex-husband prick of mine. Quatre was from his second marriage, and I nearly shit myself when I saw Quatre last week, homeless and playing for money. Peachtree is my maiden name Trowa. My ex is an asshole. Threw Quatre out on his ear about four years ago when he found out Quatre was gay. I’ve been trying to find him for a while now. But the boy has pride, and I just knew if anyone deserved Quatre you did Trowa. I’m glad my hunch was correct.” She said taking a long drag on her smoke and exhaling slowly.

“You’re devious, but thank you. I’m sure Quatre will thank you too.”

“It was nothing, I’m just glad to see you both happy for a change. Now go keep him warm.” Mae said going back into her apartment. Smiling to herself, “Trowa, you always did have a soft spot for strays.” She said before taking one last drag of her cigarette and stubbing it out in the overflowing tray on her counter.

“And Quatre could always tell when someone needed him. You two will work out just fine.” She said shutting off the light and going to bed with a smile still tugging on her lips. A mother’s job was never done.

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