

Title: The Sun Never Sets

Author: D "The Fablespinner"

Pairings: 3x4 (A-yup a-nudder one.) 1xC, male OC x male OC

Rating: R (For now. Due to issues discussed folks not sex)

Genre: AU/ Romance/Drama (I don't know why I bother putting this down anymore.)

Disclaimer: Characters still not mine, will never be mine.

Warnings: Umm, I'd say Religion issues. But we're talking EXTREME beliefs not actual religions. None are mentioned and they are all made up anyway. This isn't earth folks. Seems like it, but just call it a parallel universe type thing. Similar, but not. ~_^

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CHAPTER ONE:

Catherine squinted up into the setting sun for a moment before turning to her companion beside her. "It's still hot. I can't believe it's still this hot so late in the day." She said making idle chatter. Her companion only nodded once, his bright, evergreen eyes still on the road ahead of them as their troupe meandered lazily along the forest track.

Their brightly colored wagons pulled by sturdy oxen and a few jackasses. Their wagon pulling up the rear of the procession as it slowly lurched forward. Wandering the world's roads for generations.

Some called them vagabonds, some called them gypsies, and some called them much worse. To the people who lived this freedom of existence, it was just who they were. The Traveling Free Peoples, entertainers, singers, jugglers, fortunetellers, acrobats, whatever talents the heavens blessed them with was what they became in life. They lived by trading their talents from village to village, warming hearts here and there. Bringing a mystery to lonely people, stuck in a drab stationary world, and bringing the exotic to the mundane.

Catherine embodied the free people's spirit; she was as vivacious and boisterous about celebrating freedom and life, as she was beautiful to behold, while she cheerfully tried once more to engage her younger sibling in conversation, to no avail.

Trowa, in personality, was the exact opposite of his sister. Quiet, withdrawn, and contemplative. It wasn't that he was not happy leading the life he did, he had always been a quiet child, and had grown into a quiet young man.

Many talents had he been born with, he could tumble better than any of the troupe's acrobats, he could play better than any of the musicians, except for two. But he chose, however, not to pursue those talents. He was not eager to showcase himself to crowds in villages. He much preferred playing his reed pipes or flute in the solitude of his wagon, or to the trees of the forest.

He chose to follow yet another gift bestowed upon him instead. He chose a life that tended the ailing and the sick. Both those of his troupe and the beasts they depended on. Spending several hours scrounging forest paths away from the camp to gather the herbs he needed and used to make the medicines he would administer to his clan and kin.

This quiet life suited him, and rewarded him with a contentment of purpose. He was needed, he was appreciated, and he did enjoy seeing the smile of a child after a skinned knee was bandaged, or the relieved and overjoyed face of a woman who held a newborn in her arms that he had helped deliver.

A satisfying existence, albeit a lonely one at times. His nature being so serene, everyone aside from his sister, forgot he was there most of the time unless they needed him. He did appreciate Catherine's chatter, it made him feel loved and acknowledged as not just the healer, but as a person.

"Trowa, I'm worried about you." Catherine said as the troupe began to pull off the road to set up camp for the evening.

"Whatever for? I'm fine Kate." Trowa said jumping down from the wagon and offering his hand to help his sister down.

"I mean you are twenty-two years old. Men have BABES by now Trowa Barton. You don't even have a wife." Catherine began. Trowa rolled his eyes; he'd heard this one before.

"I don't want a wife. I've told you this before." Trowa said as he began to tend to their oxen.

"And I don't understand WHY. Surely one of the girls here appeal to you. Who's going to take care of you when I leave?" Catherine began and Trowa chuckled.

"Actually, they don't Kate. It's not that I don't like women. I just do not like them in THAT way. Have you not figured it out yet?" Trowa asked looking over at his sister as he watched the penny drop.

"Oooooooh, I see." Catherine said chewing her bottom lip. "That would be a problem." She said and Trowa nodded.

"Too true. The only two men in this troupe like me already have each other. And well, they are a bit old for me." Trowa said tilting his head toward the much older men across the way helping each other make camp.

"Like either of them would give the other up. Not likely, they've been together going on thirty years I guess." Catherine said as she began to make a fire to make dinner.

"Precisely. Don't fret Kate. One day I may find him, I may not. I'm not unhappy if that's what you are worried about. And I am a big boy who can take care of himself just fine. Honest." Trowa said kissing his sister's cheek before moving to rub down his oxen and get them fed and settled for the night.

"You may not be unhappy Trowa. But you're lonely, I can't help but worry about you, that's what sister's do." Catherine muttered to herself as she began peeling potatoes for her stew.

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Once Trowa had seen to the animals he set about fixing the wagon in place for the night. A wagon that in two days time would be only his home. Catherine was set to marry Heero and would be moving to start her own family in his wagon. Not that Trowa minded. Heero was a good man and a good friend ever since they'd been children.

Heero was not born into the troupe, but had been adopted into it as a small boy. His adoptive parents had found him half starved to death in a ditch as a toddler. His mother dead from a beating it had appeared. He had been only around three years old, and if he remembered what happened at all, he never spoke of it. And like Trowa he had grown up a reserved and quiet boy. He was Trowa's age and they spent their youth's together as near brothers. Both boys seeking their place in the troupe out of the public eye. Heero built and maintained the wagons, making sure everyone's homes were fit for travel at all times. Changing the wheels on wagons when they needed it, and shoeing the animals that bore them across the land.

It figured Catherine would end up marrying him, she did have an odd penchant for mothering broody young men.

Trowa mused as he finished his task and decided to head into the nearby forest before the light died away to scrounge up some extra firewood and see if any of the mushrooms he needed for his supplies were growing nearby.

He informed his sister what he was up to as he grabbed a collection container and began walking into the thicket. He had not wandered far, he was only just out of sight from the road when he nearly tripped and fell over what at first glance looked like a fallen log. When Trowa heard the feeble moan however his breath stopped short and he quickly knelt, brushing away the debris that had been piled on top of the mound.

What he found chilled his blood, a young man, judging by the size of the body was wrapped in a black cloak, dirt clung to him everywhere as if someone had been trying to bury him alive. He was bound hand and foot, and he lay half dead where he had been dumped in the forest, moaning only when Trowa had almost fallen over him where he lay crumpled, motionless, and fading from life rapidly.

Trowa wasted no breath and quickly scooped the man up and raced back to his wagon. "Kate! Quickly! Boil me some water and fix for me a small washing basin!" Trowa ordered as he broke free of the forest in almost a run. Catherine looked up and gasped when she saw what Trowa carried. She immediately flew into action to get whatever Trowa needed as he tended his burden inside their wagon.

Trowa lay the young man down in his bed and quickly moved to cut the bindings from his ankles and wrists. He then unwrapped the cloak from the body and once again Trowa's breath caught in his throat. The young man's clothes were shredded as if he had been attacked by wolves, and dried blood clung to his garments. His hands were scratched, where they lay protecting his face. Trowa gently reached up to move his hands and tears formed when Trowa saw what lay beneath.

Beauty could never be hidden, not even by layers of dirt, and what lay before Trowa was nothing short of divine. Catherine entered and set the washing basin beside Trowa and Trowa reached in and took a hot cloth from the basin, as he mixed in a fragrant and healing soap into the water. It would keep infection from abused skin as well as free the youth before him of the filth that covered him.

Trowa began with his beautiful face, and as pristine white skin began to shimmer in the lamp light Trowa found himself lost as he ran the cloth almost reverently across soft flesh.

Trowa then set the cloth down, and turned to his patient. "Forgive me, but I must in order to help you." Trowa said softly to the unconscious youth as he began to remove the ruined clothes. He tossed them outside when he was finished. "Burn those. They're useless anyway and please find him something to wear Kate. He's just a tad smaller than Heero I'd wager. Please ask..."

"I'll ask, he'll have something." Catherine cut Trowa off and dashed off to find Heero.

Trowa immediately turned back around to his patient and began to cleanse the many scrapes, scratches, and cuts that marred the youth's entire body. Only his face was untouched it seemed, and Trowa wanted to weep. He'd never seen someone so brutally given up to the elements before. He'd heard of Villagers doing this to their own before, but he'd never actually seen it. Just what crime had this youth committed to be savagely turned out and left for dead?

A small moan of pain issued forth as Trowa ran his hand across a rib. "And bruised ribs. From kicking I'd wager." Trowa said, anger filling up his core. Something so innocent looking as the young man before him surely could not have done anything to warrant such cruelty.

"No, father please. Forgive me, I beg you, please." Came the mumbled words from his patient's lips as Trowa ministered to his wounds.

Trowa's hand shook, even the voice was beautiful, but the words, the words spoken were agony to listen to.

"I never did it to shame you father, please believe me!" The young man continued to beg for mercy.

"Stop please." Trowa said, he couldn't listen anymore. "Just hush, you are safe here, no one will hurt you. Just lie still and sleep, all will be well." Trowa reassured, brushing long golden bangs from the young man's face and forehead.

Suddenly the youth's eyes snapped open, wide with fear, shock, and terror. "NO!" He screamed going to sit up, to only crumple in agony and pain. Trowa caught him up in strong arms.

"Shhhhhh, it's all right. It's all right, just rest." Trowa murmured softly as the youth began to shake.

"Where am I?" the soft tenor asked as he trembled in Trowa's embrace.

"My wagon, I found you. I am a healer, don't worry and do as I say and you'll be all right." Trowa reassured gently, pushing the blonde youth back to rest against the mattress.

The boy still looked terrified and Trowa gently took his hand. "It's going to be all right, I promise. My name is Trowa, and I vow to do everything I can to help you heal. Inside and out." Trowa said into searching blue eyes.

"There is no help for me. I'm a sinner." The youth said and Trowa raised an eyebrow.

"And what is this sin that causes such inhuman punishment?"

"I shame my family with who I am, and I broke the laws. That is what makes me a sinner." Quatre said averting his eyes. Trowa snorted.

"What law?" Trowa asked

"Which one, there are many. I taught myself to play music, I danced, I sang, and I loved those I shouldn't. I am a creature who willfully sought pleasure and I must pay for my sins." The young man said tears running down his face.

"What's your name?" Trowa asked tenderly, his heart hammering in his chest. He'd known of some villages whose beliefs made all joys in life sins, but as far as music and dancing being a sin, Trowa had never heard of this and it broke his heart to see someone very nearly killed for innocent music and love for simple pleasure. The Free People would be outraged when they found out about this suffering young man.

"Quatre."

"Well Quatre. I know you won't believe me now, in time you will. But song is a gift to be shared, and love, love is the greatest gift of all. Don't feel ashamed for acting as your heart tells you to, the heart never lies." Trowa said covering Quatre with a light blanket. Quatre looked confused.

"I know my words sound blasphemous to you if you were raised to believe all joy is sin. When you are well you will see that not everyone believes as your village told you to believe. We are given free will as people, we are directed by our desires, our dreams, and our emotions. It is how we react that make us good or sinners. But it's not for man to decide death as a punishment. We believe that to presume the will of the maker is a sin. Judge not the finality of life. To many that's

considered sinful. It's enough to boggle the minds of healthy men, let alone you who need rest." Trowa said smiling.

"Just sleep, and know you are not alone. You've much to learn, and much to forget, and much to heal in spirit and body. All in good time will you learn the truth of man and the world around you. Sleep now. I'll wake you a little while to eat, and then you will sleep again. I'll answer all the questions you are thinking now, only after I feel you've rested and eaten enough." Trowa said before walking out to leave his patient to go to sleep.

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Quatre awoke to a glorious smell that began his very empty stomach to rumbling. He felt the edge of the bed dip and a soft hand touch his cheek before a soft feminine voice spoke. "Wake up love, time to eat." She said and Quatre blinked open his eyes slowly to gaze into the concerned face of a lovely young woman. Her gray eyes flecked in lavender filled with compassion.

"Are you the healer's wife?" He asked, almost with a hint of regret. Subtle tones that went unnoticed, but they were there nonetheless. The young woman laughed.

"Oh heavens no. I'm his sister. Trowa's out making you some smelly pain medicine. He's ordered me to feed you until you can't eat another bite." Catherine said wrinkling her nose playfully, getting a soft smile in return.

"Goodness, you are so cute." Catherine said pinching Quatre's cheek as she moved to help him sit up slightly. "I swear you're prettier than all the men and most of the women in our troupe. You're going to make people jealous of you." She teased and she watched a sadness come over her charge.

"Oh no, don't get upset dear. I'm playing with you. Yes, you're gorgeous, but no one here is going to get mad at you for it. Oh goodness me." Catherine said flustered as she tucked blonde hair behind Quatre's ears in a motherly fashion.

"I don't want to be a burden or cause any trouble." Quatre said dejectedly and Catherine held him to her chest gently.

"Don't be silly love. Trowa's told me what happened, and he's right, you've done nothing wrong. We just want to help you, we WANT to make amends for the terrible wrongs you've suffered." Catherine said soothingly.

"Why?"

"Why not? It's the right thing to do. Stranger to us you may be, but all friends start out as strangers. You need help. We can help. If we were to leave you now when you need us, we'd be no better than the people who did this to you. That's why, do you understand?" Catherine asked and Quatre nodded melting into her mother like embrace weeping.

"There, there love. It's all right." Catherine cooed as Trowa entered the wagon. He mouthed a query and Catherine just ruefully smiled and shook her head. Quatre needed to purge without interruption. Trowa nodded and just sat down to wait until Quatre finished releasing his anguish into a pseudo-replacement for a mother figure.

Every now and again, no matter how old the man or woman, sometimes all one needed was just the reassuring comfort that only a mother could give. It seemed that was just the case with Quatre as he purged the demons from his soul into her welcoming shoulder.

"I'm sorry." Quatre said sniffing as he sat up.

"Don't be, it's all right." Catherine said as Trowa stood to prop up pillows behind his patient.

"She's right Quatre. Don't worry about it. Besides, she's a mother hen, you just made her night." Trowa said with a wink at Quatre. Quatre smiled and softly chuckled, he was exquisite when he smiled. He captivated Trowa with his beauty when he smiled like that.

"Hey, bossy! No telling my secrets to patients." Catherine scolded and smiled at Quatre. "Not like that one isn't common knowledge around here, but still..." Catherine said grinning and picking up the bowl of stew she'd carried in. "Now then, let's get you fed love, you're too thin."

"Everyone is too thin for you nag. If she had her way, we'd all be walking around here ready to burst at the seams. He's perfectly healthy Kate, and a good weight. He needs a few pounds, and rest. That's all, he's not a turkey to be fattened up for dinner." Trowa teased once more winking at Quatre, who shyly blushed.

Trowa's eyebrows raised and his skin began to tingle as his gaze locked with Quatre's and held for a moment. For the first time in his life, Trowa felt inexplicably drawn toward another. There was something about Quatre that excited his senses beyond all scope or reason. It just felt thrilling, new, exciting. Damn it! He simply had his very first crush on another person and it pissed Trowa off as much as it thrilled him. Damn Quatre for being beautiful to look at, he was going to drive Trowa batty with desire before he was healthy again. Not to mention it was difficult to get to know the real person if you were constantly fawning over them like some lovesick puppy in heat.

"Pardon me a moment, I need to get some water for Quatre." Trowa said out loud, he was thinking however of how much he needed the water in order to cool down. Quatre was too young, he couldn't be more than sixteen, Trowa was twenty-two, he was too old for Quatre. At least that was what he was trying to rationalize to himself, his body had other ideas, and cold water was the cure for this ailment.

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Trowa found a nearby brook; sparkling clear in the moonlight and filled his bucket before stripping off his shirt and splashing himself with the cold, clean water. "I knew it Dimitri, look at him. He's a wreck." Came the sniggering voice behind Trowa.

"Leave Trowa alone Anastas, let the man cool off." Came the deep rumbling chuckle as two men appeared beside Trowa at the stream with buckets in hand.

"So how is he?" Anastas asked as he stooped to fill his bucket. "We saw you carry someone into your wagon, and Catherine seemed frantic." Anastas asked, concern filling his muted tenor.

"His body is weak and bruised. But it's his spirit that will need the most care." Trowa said with a sigh pushing his damp bangs out of his hair.

Dimitri nodded. "So we gathered from the state you and your sister were in getting the stranger cared for. But I have never seen you so agitated before Trowa. Just who is this person in your wagon?" Dimitri asked filling his own bucket from the stream.

"Truthfully, I don't know yet myself. Have either of you ever heard of a village that banned music as heresy?" Trowa asked the instrument maker and harpist beside him. Dimitri growled.

"Aye, there's one such sect. EVERYTHING is a sin. Affection, music, dance, sex even for procreation must be repented for. Is that what happened to that lad?" Dimitri asked and Trowa nodded.

"I think so, he said he broke the law and sinned with song. But he also said 'I loved those I shouldn't' I can only guess what he meant by that." Trowa said exchanging knowing looks between the men beside him.

"You think he's like us Trowa?" Anastas asked, his voice almost cracking in concern.

"I don't know. I want to say yes, but I'm just not sure. And he's so tired and weak I dare not press him to clarify. All I know is they left him beaten, broken, and prepared to die. That I cannot forgive and I will be damned if I let those who did that to him win. I will heal him both in body and in soul." Trowa said with conviction and Anastas smiled at Dimitri.

"Do my eyes and ears deceive me? I do believe our Trowa is falling in love with a stranger." Anastas purred and Trowa glared.

"I am not, I'm just concerned about him. As I would with anyone in his position." Trowa protested and Dimitri chuckled and sat back. Anastas was wearing his patented, shit eating grin, this was going to be entertaining watching his life long lover torment Trowa.

"I beg to differ Trowa Barton. I have known you your whole life, I know you as well as if you were my son, and I know you have never, ever worn that look on your face before. You're infatuated, it's written all over your face." Anastas said flipping his long black hair over his shoulder. The silver streak running alongside his left temple the only sign of age on his lithe, beautiful frame. His pale blue eyes sparkling with mischief that was befitting a man of eighteen and not nearly fifty.

"It is not. Don't you have someone else to bother?" Trowa asked going to walk away, but Anastas stepped in his way.

"Nope, not at the moment. Sit boy." Anastas ordered and Trowa felt Dimitri's huge paw of a hand descend onto his shoulder to pull him down on the fallen Log Dimitri was currently sitting on. He too was aging remarkably well, for a man of almost fifty-five he looked no older than thirty-five, with a massive, burly frame, and hands that looked more like a blacksmith's than a man that crafted infinitely delicate musical instruments.

"Yes, we've been meaning to talk to you for sometime now Trowa. Now is as good a time as any for you to learn what no one has told you." Dimitri began and Trowa flushed.

"Oh spare me. I do not need a sex talk. I am quite well aware how it goes thank you. I am not ten." Trowa began and Anastas laughed.

"You are aware, but you don't know it all. Knowledge is fine, truth and consequences are even more important. This is the truth, and what you MUST know. Love between men is vastly different than love between men and women. This is what you don't know... yet." Anastas began, grinning at Trowa's obvious discomfort with being cornered.

For the next half-hour, Trowa got a crash course in the technical fundamentals of gay sex. He was flushed like a ripe tomato by the time he got back to his wagon with the water. He was, on one hand, grateful for the extra knowledge, on the other, he was also rather embarrassed to have heard the intimate details of thirty years worth of Dimitri's and Anastas' sex life.

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Quatre had just finished his second bowl of stew and looked leagues better where he sat shirtless in Trowa's bed. The blankets were covering his naked lower section. Trowa wanted to bang his head against the wall. Quatre looked divine sitting there in his bed. Even battered, he was exceedingly beautiful. He was going to give Anastas a run for his money in the looks department once he was fully recovered.

Whereas Anastas was like midnight beauty, dark and stunning to behold, Quatre was the golden sunshine of the dawn. Fresh, new and inviting and Trowa was lost, staring dumbly at the vision before Catherine's voice registered in his head.

"Trowa? What's wrong with you? You're off in dream land, wake up dummy." Catherine said and Trowa shook off his stupor.

"Huh? I'm sorry." Trowa said giving his sister a sheepish smile.

"I SAID, give Quatre some water, I'm going to go see what's keeping Heero with the clothes." Catherine said vacating her spot on the edge of Quatre's bed and going out to find her fiancée.

Trowa set the bucket down on a nearby chest and filled a small cup before moving to Quatre's side and sitting down. "Can you hold this or do you need my help?" Trowa asked as Quatre reached up to shyly take the cup, his hands shaking slightly.

"I think I can do it." Quatre said meekly, not meeting Trowa's eyes. As his fingers reached the cup and encountered Trowa's hands he trembled even more.

"I think not. Here, let me." Trowa said bringing the cup to Quatre's lips instead and smiling encouragement as Quatre's gaze lifted up to accept the cup and therefore lifted high enough to meet Trowa's eyes with his own. Quatre closed his eyes and took a drink, the cool water refreshing and cleansing as he swallowed.

"Quatre, you don't have to be afraid of me. I promise you I mean you no harm." Trowa said setting the cup down on the dresser, taking Quatre's hand in his own.

"It's not that. I know you're very kind, I can tell. It's just..." Quatre began then fell silent.

"Just what Quatre? You can tell me." Trowa encouraged, knowing what was just aching to fall from Quatre's lips.

"It's nothing. It seems I am still just a sinner." Quatre said, tears welling, but refusing to fall.

"No, you're not. And I think I am not the person to convince you of this one either. I have a feeling I am part of this perceived problem in your mind." Trowa said squeezing Quatre's hand gently. "Sit there a moment. I'd like you to meet some people who I think will make you feel better about who you are Quatre." Trowa said moving to the door and making haste to Dimitri and Anastas. He had a feeling these two would be able to work wonders for Quatre's self-confidence.

Being that they were both musicians, AND homosexual, he would be able to relate to them on several levels. If Trowa guessed right and played his hunch, a meeting with Dimitri and Anastas was exactly what Quatre needed.

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Trowa sat outside, eavesdropping, it was better if he stayed out of sight temporarily until called upon, or rather, that had been Dimitri's orders upon entering Trowa's wagon with Anastas.

"So young one, I have a feeling that face of yours belies your years. It was the same for me once. How old are you?" Anastas asked setting himself down on the foot of Trowa's bed. Dimitri occupying the floor beside it in order to mask his large frame and be more on a level of the skittish boy laying upon and between Trowa's bedcovers.

"I'm nineteen sir." Quatre hesitated, and almost whispered his reply.

"I thought so, and it's Anastas, not sir." He said with a wink and a grin as he began plucking softly on a small lap harp. Soothing notes to help ease the stress Quatre was feeling. All tricks to soothe and reassure subtly and on a deeper subconscious level.

"Trowa is awfully worried about you. As are we Quatre." Dimitri's voice cut into the song, his mellow bass almost in counterpoint harmony to the notes that were being played by Anastas on the harp. "I've long known of your sect in these regions. I have never before seen however one lucky enough to survive such unjust punishment. And it is unjust Quatre. You may not believe it now, but it's true, and you will learn that in time." Dimitri said as he watched Quatre droop, his eyes heavy with fatigue as he was lulled by the music.

"Ssssinner." Quatre slurred and Dimitri ran a soft, gentle hand through Quatre's hair.

"Sssh, no you're not son. You're human, we are all different in design, all meant to follow our hearts as we are directed. The gods speak to us through our hearts, it's only man's will to listen to the voices and heed them, or ignore them. That is what makes us truly sinners or saints." Dimitri lulled, watching Quatre fade and lean into the reassuring touch.

"If there is music in your heart, it was put there by the gods, if there is love in your breast, it was put there by their hands. A blessing, a calling, a paradise of peace, heaven on earth for those who love, songs eternal for voices unfettered. Sing, sing unto the gods, rejoice in their bounty. Revel in their blessing. But beware, if there is evil in your thoughts and you ignore your heart, only that doth a sinner make. The path to damnation is to ignore the voices within your soul." Anastas did sing those words in a soft ballad as Dimitri moved up onto the bed and pulled Quatre into a loose embrace. Rocking him to and fro gently as they swayed to the music.

"So pretty." Quatre sighed, listening to the music and melting into the warmth of the arms that held him like a babe.

"Thank you Quatre." Anastas said smiling at his lover. Who was fondly cradling Quatre as he would a small child.

"You look like a proud papa." Anastas said softly as Quatre drifted to sleep, never ceasing his lullaby on his harp. Weaving his bardic gifts into the notes to urge Quatre into a peaceful, restful repose.

"I strangely feel like one. He's hurting, deeply. And he has the bardic gifts; I can feel them leaking energy, draining him further. He's untrained, and that can be dangerous. He needs us Ana." Dimitri said finger combing flaxen locks.

"I thought I felt something from him. Trowa will not be able to heal him on his own. Have we adopted a son my love?" Anastas asked, knowing full well the answer he was about to receive.

"Yes, we have. We always did want a son, I believe Quatre will be all we have ever desired and more." Dimitri said picking up Quatre and carrying him out of Trowa's wagon.

"I heard." Trowa said coming over quietly. "Mind his ribs, and make him take this medicine for pain after he eats." Trowa instructed and felt almost bereft at seeing Quatre leave. "I'll check on him in the morning." Trowa said absently brushing Quatre's hair from his face.

"So we expect you to visit him Trowa." Anastas said, a playful smirk on his face. "But, I expect you to behave yourself when wooing my son." He added with a wink as Quatre was taken to his new home and new place among the traveling clan.

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How to pronounce the names:

Anastas = AH-nuhz-tahs (This is a Greek/Macedonian name, It was my Great Uncle's name. In English the name means "Thomas". Derivatives (nicknames) of this name are: "Ana" = AHN-ah is equivalent to "Tom" or "Nastay" = NAHZ-tay is equivalent to "Tommy")

Dimitri = DEH-mee-tree (Also a Greek/Macedonian Name. In English the name means "James". Derivatives (nicknames) of this name are: "Dim" = Dehm is equivalent to "Jim".)

Dimitri was my Great Grandfather's name. Anastas' father and my Grandfather, Alexandre's father. Anastas was my grandfather's youngest brother. I'm sure you wanted to know my family tree here. I was just letting you know how I came up with the names. I just think they're cool and I always wanted an excuse to use them in a fic. *GRIN*

CHAPTER TWO:

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Quatre felt a gentle nudge and blinked open weary eyes. "Good morning sunshine. I have some tea for you and Papa-Dim is making you something to eat." Anastas said prodding his newly adopted son into wakefulness.

Quatre's eyes shot open as he took in the strange surroundings. "Where am I?" He asked in panic and Anastas smiled and just smoothed Quatre's hair from his brow.

"You're home." Anastas said softly as Quatre made eye contact.

"What?"

"You heard me sunshine." Ana said sitting on the edge of Quatre's bed. "You're home. I know it will take some getting used to, seeing as you are not quite the normal age of one that gets adopted into the clan. But Quatre, from this point on, you are home, you are my son." Anastas said placing the cup into Quatre's hand.

"Your son?" Quatre asked, still foggy from sleep as his head spun with unexpected news.

Ana nodded. "Yes sunshine. My Son, my student, my responsibility until you find your own place among us. I promise to provide you everything you need to become a member of our clan and your own man among the Traveling Free People." Anastas said as Dimitri stepped into the wagon.

"That goes for me too, Son." Dimitri said setting up a tray before Quatre in bed. A bowl of hot and liberally spiced oatmeal, which smelled positively scrumptious, was set in front of a very hungry Quatre.

Quatre looked from Anastas to Dimitri and back again as his eyes slowly widened in disbelief.

"Um, I... Are you two?... Oh my, how do I ask this?" Quatre stammered unsure what would be considered rude to ask.

Anastas chuckled. "No Quatre your eyes do not deceive you. You have two fathers. This is unsettling to you?" Ana asked and Quatre shook his head.

"Oh no! It's just, it's a..." he almost said 'sin', but somehow, something deep inside told him that these two people who radiated nothing but concern and kindness for him couldn't possibly be sinners.

"A sin?" Dimitri asked sitting down in a chair beside Quatre's bed. Quatre hung his head in shame.

"Son, look at me." Dimitri asked and Quatre shyly looked up. "Love is not a sin, it's a blessing. The gods dictate your heart. You don't choose love, love chooses you, and seems to choose you when you least expect it." Dimitri said smiling. "Let me tell you a story while you eat." Dimitri said settling back in his chair while Quatre began to eat as instructed.

"I was not much older than you are now. I had just finished my apprenticeship as a craftsman when my clan came down with a serious epidemic. Our numbers were decimated and I myself was near death's door. It was then when this clan we are with now happened upon us, and I woke up in the arms of the most beautiful creature I'd ever laid eyes on. He was singing softly to

me, and I could feel his gifts feeding me strength until the healer could help me. Bardic gifts appear and are bestowed to only a few. I was born with the bardic gift of creation. My power is fed into the instruments I build. Each one has a soul, and each one speaks to me, tells me what it wishes to be fashioned into. Be it a harp, a lyre, a drum, whatever the soul of the piece desires, I make.

The young creature that was singing to me had the most rare and the most stupendous of all the bardic gifts. He had the ability to take song and with nothing more than the will of his heart and mind, transcend the music and make it penetrate the living soul of others. He could make them weep with sorrow, laugh with joy, love with fiery passion, or soothe a troubled and weary breast. That was what he did for me, sustained me in song, giving me rest while I waited to be healed.” Dimitri began and Anastas subtly reached for a handkerchief. He loved how Dimitri told this tale.

Quatre sat enthralled, hanging on every word Dimitri spoke. His eyes misty with romance and light as he absorbed the tale. Starved for any such story of affection and fateful meetings.

“When I gained my health back, I immediately began to fashion a gift for this bard who had so tended me, and who, I must say, had stolen my young heart.” Dimitri said as Anastas got up and pulled down a small lap harp off its peg on the wall. It was well worn and smooth with age and several years worth of loving use. The wood had become darkened from the oily residue from the player’s hands and the elements of time and age and the instrument seemed to shimmer in the morning light.

“Never before or since had I made anything so perfect. It was and is my greatest masterpiece. But an instrument without a voice to bring it life is just an instrument. It took the hands of the one I loved to bring life to the soul the instrument possessed.” Dimitri continued as Anastas began to play.

“How could I refuse you when you bring me such lovely toys?” Ana chuckled as Quatre realized the bard that Dimitri spoke of was Anastas. “Not to mention you were so rugged and handsome. It was hard for me to sing for fear of drowning I was drooling so much.” Ana added and Quatre smiled and Dimitri glared at his lover.

“For a man who knows how to place an entire room into emotional turmoil, you certainly know how to spoil a romantic mood.” Dimitri said chuckling and looked over at Quatre.

“Ahhh, but romance came later. I was only sixteen when you began to woo me my love.” Anastas sniggered and winked at Quatre.

“That is true. But I am a patient man; I would have waited an eternity for you if I’d had to. I was in love. I didn’t ask for it to happen, I never expected it too, and had circumstances not placed me where I was, I may have never even met the person I love most in the world.” Dimitri said taking Anastas’ hand and tenderly kissing the back of it before continuing his story. “My point Quatre should be clear. Until I met Anastas, I had never even considered a spouse, after I met him, I wanted no other. I did not choose to fall in love, love chose me. And I am eternally grateful for it.” Dimitri said running an absent hand down Anastas’ long mane of midnight black hair.

“That’s a beautiful tale. How Romantic.” Quatre sighed still dreamy eyed as he sat back into his pillows.

“Love is the most beautiful thing in the world. And when it comes for you Quatre, hold onto it for all it’s worth. It is NEVER a sin to love another person. No matter who they are or what others have told you.” Dimitri said tapping the bowl before Quatre with his finger. “Eat boy, it grows cold. Get all gooey eyed later.” Dimitri teased and Quatre smiled.

"Then don't tell me such romantic stories. I cannot help but feel awed by them. I've always loved them, but where I'm from, love is not to be talked about. It's a sin to be anything but pious to the makers. All acts of human mortality are transgressions, and signs that we are too weak and tempted too easily by demons." Quatre sighed and Dimitri nodded.

"I know Son. I've met your sect before. They take good intent and then take it too far. Man cannot cage his soul. It will find a way to break free in one way or another. I've seen it in your clan. Affection is forbidden, so a man brutalizes his wife in their marriage bed for release. Song is heresy so men scream and rage at each other, never listening to one another. Those born like you Quatre, are killed before we can reach them in time. I am so happy we have you my son. Your gifts will not be wasted." Dimitri said with a relieved sigh.

"My gifts?"

"Aye sunshine. Did you ever wonder why even though you knew you weren't allowed, you sang anyway? Why you found yourself tapping a beat with your fingers in counterpoint to your footsteps? Why you could feel the tension and despair in others and you hummed softly, unconsciously, and set them at ease once more?" Anastas asked and Quatre dropped his spoon.

"YES! Why do I do that? I was doing it before I even realized I was. And I was always getting beaten for it, sometimes before I even knew I was doing it in the first place!" Quatre sobbed and Anastas took his hand.

"It's your calling sunshine. You are like me; you can't NOT make music. It's constantly playing inside you and you have to let it out before it bursts you wide open. You have this NEED to give others the music inside you, and there is no way you can stop yourself. That is our gift. It's annoying as hell to have music in your head all the time. It's frustrating to feel everyone else's emotions all the time. But, it's the greatest feeling on the planet, to know that your lullaby hushed a teething babe into sleep. Your voice alone that helped a heartbroken and rejected lover find peace, or your song from the heart, that urged a young man to confess his love to another. It's the highest of highs. It's better than sex." Anastas said grinning and then laughing as Quatre choked on his final statement.

"I'll take your word for it. I wouldn't know." Quatre said blushing and looking into his bowl.

"Oh, yes. Trust me." Ana said smiling and settling himself more comfortably beside Quatre. "But you need training how to use your gifts sunshine. Or rather learn how not to abuse them. Know when to play and help and know when to bite your tongue and let conflict sort itself out without your subtle urging. That's the tricky part. You and I could quite easily go around manipulating people to think the way we want them to with our music. THAT is a sin. We are only guides and suggestions. We can't, we MUST NOT, presume we know it all and do the thinking for other men. That's what I will teach you to recognize. When to sing, and when not to." Anastas said as a devilish grin spread across his face.

"Apart from good old fashioned parties of course, where it's just damn fun to get everybody horny as hell and watch them all disappear one by one to get hot and heavy in the bushes."

Anastas got no further, Quatre was sputtering, choking up foodstuff, and blushing redder than a raspberry. "Ah, sunshine, you've got to loosen up." Anastas said patting Quatre's back.

"No, you need to stop being a shit Ana. You know perfectly well you were baiting him." Dimitri scolded helping clear away Quatre's bowl just as a knock came to the door and Trowa poked his head in.

"He's coughing is he all right?" Trowa rushed over in concern.

"I'm fine. I just choked." Quatre said smiling shyly at the healer.

"No, Ana made you choke being rude. Don't be afraid to tell on your father when he's being vulgar." Dimitri said and Trowa scowled at Anastas.

"All right, all right. Stop with the look of death Trowa." Ana said grinning at Quatre. "Don't mind young Barton here sunshine. He's not usually so surly and mean looking." Anastas said leaning over Trowa's shoulder to look at Quatre with a wink. "In fact, he's quite handsome when he deigns to smile. I mean look at those eyes, who wouldn't swoon?" Anastas said, getting Trowa's elbow in the ribs and Quatre flushed even more and looked away.

"Good Gods! What is that awful thing in your hand Trowa?" Ana said switching gears and snatching the clothes out of Trowa's hand.

"From Heero for Quatre." Trowa said and Ana literally threw them back at Trowa.

"Oh I think not! Heero has the fashion sense of a warthog on a bad day! I'll dress Quatre, PROPERLY. He's too beautiful for those horrid things." Ana said throwing his nose up in distaste.

Dimitri just chuckled silently shaking his head. Anastas was as vain as a peacock, and was obviously about to turn his new son into a living doll.

"It's a shirt and trousers." Trowa sighed setting the clothes down on the end of Quatre's bed.

"No it's a travesty and an eye sore. Quatre's too fair for such dark colors. And certainly NOT that awful drab brown. Ugh! No, pastels are for Quatre's skin tone. Quatre needs a rainbow of color to liven him up!" Anastas began digging through chest after chest. "Damn, nothing in here. That's it, I'm going to visit Sally and Hilde. They MUST have something that will work." Anastas said standing looking determined.

"Well Trowa. It looks like Ana is set, you know better than to argue. We'll be back shortly Son. You're in good hands." Dimitri said turning to Ana.

Ana just left laughing as Dimitri dragged his ornery, stubborn and vain spouse outside of the wagon.

"Sorry." Quatre said softly as Trowa began fixing him some pain medication.

"Don't be, I'm used to Ana. You're not." Trowa said smiling down at Quatre.

Anastas was right; Trowa was a simply breath-taking to look at when he smiled like that. Quatre felt his heart rate twitter for a moment before steadily getting faster the longer he gazed at the tall and handsome young healer.

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After swallowing the horrid concoction Trowa fixed for him Quatre grimaced with distaste.

"I know it's awful stuff. But it'll dull the aches I'm sure you're suffering this morning." Trowa said taking the cup from Quatre with a soft smile.

"Thank you. I do feel better this morning, but I am sore in places I didn't even know I had." Quatre said back after taking a long drink of water to wash the taste out of his mouth.

Trowa chuckled. "I don't doubt that statement in the slightest. But I am pleased to see you're more alert and have a good measure of strength back in you this morning." Trowa said leaning

close and looking deep into Quatre's eyes, examining the pupils. "Your eyes aren't nearly as dilated this morning." He added moving back and sitting down in the chair by Quatre's bed.

"I slept well." Quatre said sinking deeper into the soft bed and adjusting his covers slightly in a small, shy gesture of modesty.

"I know. Ana is good at soothing people who need undisturbed rest. I am pleased beyond measure they feel the way they do about you. You've made them very happy, they've always wanted a son." Trowa said sincerely and Quatre smiled.

"It's strange. I've heard that the traveling free people adopt at will, but I never believed it. I always thought it was children you took in." Quatre said and Trowa smiled.

"That's usually the case. There are many children left orphaned or worse in this world. All are welcome in our clan. You are a special case Quatre. You need us as much as I suspect Ana and Dim needed you. This is a good match." Trowa said meeting Quatre's eyes.

A bright acceptance of fate sparkled within. "I may find it strange and a little overwhelming. But I've no doubt in the sincerity of your words. I cannot begin to even think of how I am going to thank all of you. Especially you, you saved my life Healer Barton. Thank you very much." Quatre began and Trowa smiled and shook his head.

"First, it's just Trowa and second, it was my pleasure. I am just grateful fate led me to where you needed me. I do not care to think what would have happen had I not stumbled over you. The rest I did for you is my calling. I have vowed to heal all those I can help, without question. I cannot do anything else. It's my gift." Trowa said marveling at Quatre's transformation. He seemed radiant with life, and he almost seemed to shimmer with newfound happiness. The smile on his lips was soft, endearing, and suited him far better than the look of terror and pain he had worn the night before.

"And a wonderful gift it is. My sister was a healer; I do understand the way you feel. It was the same for her." Quatre said, a shadow of regret falling across his features. "To hear her plead for me was almost my undoing. She begged for me, tried to help me, and in the end they just took her away. I have done her the most harm." Quatre sighed looking down at his hands, tears running down his cheeks.

Trowa was there in an instant to wipe them away. "I can always send her word in private, one healer to another, to assure her of your well being. We can ease her grief if she cared so much for you. There's no need for you to feel so distraught, I am sure she will be happy again to know you live and are content where you are now." Trowa comforted and Quatre sniffled and nodded into Trowa's chest.

"Please? I hate thinking of her crying like that. She's the only person who ever cared, truly cared about her errant, and sinful little brother. She always placed herself in trouble in trying to protect me." Quatre said and Trowa just held tighter as Quatre's turbulent emotions wracked him with more sobs.

"It's going to be all right Quatre. I know you feel absolutely wrung out, and confused, and a host of other warring emotions are plaguing you and they are going to come tumbling out left and right for a while. Cry all you want to, laugh when you feel like it. It's better to set your emotions free to work themselves out than to bottle them up inside. You'll never heal if you don't." Trowa counseled as Quatre let his pain flow out in his tears.

"Thank you." Quatre said after a few minutes. Sniffing and sitting up once his emotions got under control once again.

“Any time Quatre. I’m always here when you need me to heal. Whether it be your body, or in this case your soul. I’m here. Lean on me for as long as you need to.” Trowa said smiling and wiping Quatre’s cheeks with his palms. Quatre smiled at him from in-between his hands, and Trowa knew, right then and there, he’d always want to see that face smiling at him.

He prayed Quatre would always need him. Just as he felt a sudden need to hold and shelter, and love the beautiful young man who’s trusting gaze filled Trowa with a warmth he’d never felt before. Who’s smile seemed to brighten the entire room and blinded Trowa with it’s dazzling luminescence.

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Trowa was mere seconds away from making a big mistake when thankfully the moment was interrupted. He had almost done the unthinkable; he had almost kissed him. And the last thing Quatre needed was some fool adding more emotional burden to an already overflowing load. The wagon door opened and Anastas appeared with Hilde and Sally in tow. Trowa quickly vacated his spot where he was sitting on the edge of the bed, and Quatre looked almost crestfallen.

Had he wanted that kiss?

Had he known what Trowa was feeling?

Trowa needed air, and he needed it now. He almost plowed Dimitri over in his exodus. “Whoa! Hang on a minute Trowa. You look about ready to piss yourself.” Dimitri called. Clamping a huge hand down on Trowa’s shoulder to spin him around.

“I can’t think around him. Gods I almost kissed him!” Trowa hissed taking huge gulps of air.

Dimitri smiled. “So?”

“So?! Damn it Dimitri, the last thing Quatre needs is me acting like a slobbering dog! He was and is an emotional wreck. He does not need me confusing him even more.” Trowa growled and Dimitri shook his head.

“That’s where you’re wrong healer. You’re not dealing with a normal man in there. He knew everything you felt. Your not kissing him probably did more damage than it helped. You’re dealing with an adept bard and an untrained one at that. He’s got raw power and it’s intense. Like Ana, Quatre can sense emotion. He knew how you felt, and if he didn’t pull away on his own, it means he was just as receptive to you in return. Don’t forget that. You’ll never be able to lie to Quatre. He’ll know the truth. Sometimes even before you realize the truth yourself.” Dimitri said chuckling and shoving Trowa back toward the wagon.

“Now get back in there, smile pretty at him in apology, and let him know with your smile you didn’t mean to pull away and then go pack up your wagon, we’re heading out in an half hour. I expect you back tonight when we make camp. Quatre needs ALL our affection to heal. And you know that much Trowa Barton.” Dimitri commanded and Trowa did as told. Wondering who was more confused with this entire situation, Quatre or himself.

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While the large caravan of Free People got on the road again Dimitri driving their beasts along in the procession of colorful and unique wagons, Ana, Hilde and Sally sat with Quatre inside the wagon, measuring, sewing, giggling, and gushing over their newest clan member. Filling him in on the juiciest gossip involving every member of the troupe.

"You're right Ana, this shade of blue is perfect for him. It sets off those cornflower eyes of his." Sally said draping the cloth over Quatre's shoulder then stepping back to look at him.

"Of course I'm right." Ana said laying some mauve colored fabric on the other shoulder. "Ahhhh, perfect. Brings out that natural blush in his cheeks." Ana said grinning then snatching back the fabric with a grin. He looked in his element, Quatre felt extremely embarrassed.

"Oh Gods, he's blushing again!" Hilde rolled her eyes laughing. "Wait until we measure you for trousers!" She added and Quatre disappeared under the covers in mortification amidst howling laughter from Sally and Ana.

"We could always ask Trowa to come over and measure you." Sally teased poking the mound of covers with her finger. "I'm sure he wouldn't mind."

"He did look like he was about to drop dead when we showed up. I think someone's got a horrible crush on you Quatre." Hilde added, plopping down on the bed to try and dig him out from under the covers.

"My son the turtle! Out boy!" Ana said grabbing hold of the cover edge and lifting.

"NO!" Quatre said gripping the covers tighter. "I'm naked under here! There are girls in here!" Quatre cried out and Ana smirked.

"So? It's not like they don't know what a naked man looks like. You have nothing to be ashamed about son. Hell, you've got stuff to show off in my opinion. Out with you sunshine." Ana said and Quatre poked his head out only.

"No, please." Quatre asked and Ana nodded.

"Just teasing you sunshine. We'll stop." Ana said patting Quatre's head with a wink then turning to the girls.

"A shy son. I'm going to have to get used to this." Ana said grinning and sitting to start picking out trim for the garments.

"Maybe you can teach Ana some modesty. He'll walk naked as a jay-bird through a village if it suited him." Sally said setting herself next to Quatre and grinning down at him. "And I hope you know we were only playing with you Quatre." She added a little concerned. Quatre nodded, but still stayed in his cocoon of blankets.

"Good." Sally said getting up to get started in sewing up some quick clothes for Quatre to wear.

"Don't forget Kate's wedding is tomorrow. He'll need something for that if he's going." Hilde piped up and Ana smacked his forehead.

"That's right! Damn. Use this light green cloth here. He'll match us. Dim and I are wearing green." Ana said as he rummaged in the fabric bin.

"There's a wedding tomorrow?" Quatre asked now sitting up and eager to hear about a wedding.

"Aye. Catherine, Trowa's sister you met yesterday. She's leaving our poor healer to fend for himself." Ana joked grinning. "Of course we have to be there son, we must sing them wishes for blessings." Ana added throwing a horrible yellow shade of fabric back into the basket.

"That's the only time we were allowed to sing. Asking for blessings on a union. I lived for weddings." Quatre said, beaming with his romantic nature.

"Then if you're feeling up to it, you'll have to join me. I'm not quite as young as I used to be. I do need to rest my voice occasionally now." Ana said with a wink.

"REALLY?" Quatre asked excited.

"Really. Give us a song Quatre while we work. Let's hear you." Ana said once more going back to looking for trimmings to go on the soft sea foam green fabric he'd chosen for Quatre's wedding attire.

"I... My voice is a bit shaky still. I'll try my best though." Quatre apologized beforehand as he sat up straight, closed his eyes, and sang.

*Falling in love with someone,
Some one boy;
I'm falling in love with someone,
Head a whirl;*

*Yes, I'm falling in love with someone,
Plain to see,
I'm sure I could love someone madly,
If someone would only love me. (1)*

Both girls were weeping, and Ana looked haggard as he stood and on shaky legs walked over to a small chest. After rummaging a moment he dug out four rings. Two made of gold and two of silver and with shaking hands slipped them on Quatre's index and middle fingers. Alternating gold and silver. "Until I tell you otherwise, Never take these off sunshine. You're too powerful, and until you learn not to put all of your gifts into song, it can be dangerous. These we're my apprentice rings. They'll sort of dampen your power somewhat." Ana said wiping tears from his eyes.

Quatre, unsure of what was happening humbly apologized. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to make everyone cry."

"I know you didn't. You can't help it Quatre; it's your gift. Whatever emotion you feel when singing or playing will infect and the affect the listeners." Ana said composing himself quickly.

"Oh GODS! That was beautiful!" Hilde wailed blowing her nose and wiping her eyes.

"I'll say. Damn I'm jealous of whomever you're in love with Quatre." Sally added rubbing he eyes with her sleeve.

"I'm not, I just... that's a song I always liked. I heard it once when I was a boy and never forgot it." Quatre said and Ana looked pleased.

"So you have more gifts I see. You can hear a song once and instantly recall it later?" Ana asked and Quatre nodded.

"Impressive. I need at least a few attempts before I get it right." Ana said grinning and as the wagon lurched slightly, he turned and looked out the window by Quatre's bed. "It looks like we have a problem up ahead. We're stopping early." He said standing and then opening and leaning out of the window. "What's wrong?" He asked up to Dimitri who sat above them in the driver's seat.

"Duo's wagon lost a wheel to a ditch." Dimitri hollered back down and Hilde groaned.

"I told that idiot to have Heero look at it. I KNEW it was gonna fall off the first dip it hit. But Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooo, what do I know? I'm only the wife. What a dingleberry brain!" Hilde grumbled good-naturedly.

"You married him, you knew that going in." Sally teased as Hilde excused herself to go slap her husband upside of his head for ignoring her advice.

"Yes, it's my fault. But, damn it, he's so cute, I couldn't resist." Hilde said laughing as she stepped out of the wagon.

Sally just chuckled and continued to sew where she sat as Ana stepped out to talk with Dimitri quietly. Quatre meanwhile gazed out of the window and watched as a certain tall young man, with a soft fall of chestnut and cinnamon hair, and piercing green eyes stopped his wagon close by and then disembarked to lend a hand lifting Duo's wagon so Heero could fix the wheel. A soft smile crossed Quatre's face as he watched Trowa gracefully lend a hand to the problem. He sighed unconsciously; forgetting Sally was in the room with him.

She looked up and smirked when she saw the dreamy look on Quatre's face and the object he was watching out the window. "He is handsome isn't he?" She asked and watched Quatre nod before he caught himself.

"Um, I..."

"Don't." Sally said shaking her head. "There's absolutely nothing wrong love. Don't even think of apologizing for how you feel. I think it's wonderful actually. Trowa's a good man, and I think it's sweet to see him infatuated with you. And so it seems you with him." Sally said with a wink.

"He's very kind." Quatre sighed resting his cheek on the windowsill.

"That he is, quiet though. You tend to forget he's around most of the time he's so quiet." Sally murmured, biting off the extra thread at the end of her seam.

"I would never forget. I could never forget." Quatre said under his breath. Sally none the wiser to his comment. As he just gazed in wonder at the young man who made him feel for the first time in his life that he really wasn't a sinner for admiring the beauty of other men.

Trowa, in Quatre's opinion, was by far and away the most beautiful to look at. And Trowa never made him feel wrong for looking. Quite the contrary, Trowa seemed to encourage the looks. And if Quatre wasn't mistaken, he had been positive had Ana and the others not come back, he would have received his very first kiss.

Those thoughts seemed to trigger a response and Trowa turned his head and met Quatre's gaze from across the road. A slow smile spread across Trowa's features and he lifted one hand in greeting. Quatre lifted his head to smile back in return, pressing his palm against the glass to return Trowa's simple gesture.

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(1) By the middle of the act of Victor Herbert's "Naughty Marietta", it is obvious to all that the friendship between Captain Dick Warrington and Marietta D'Altena has ripened into a far stronger emotion, a condition our hero fervently reveals in the beautiful soaring "I'm Falling in Love With Someone." These are the words Quatre sings (I know me an my obscure musical references. I liked the words, they fit, and it's off the wall enough where I can weave it into an 'other world' setting like this.) I did however change "One Girl" to Read "One Boy".

CHAPTER THREE:

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Once Heero set up a prop underneath Duo's wagon he went straight to work. Quatre watched as Hilde began ranting and hitting a longhaired young man repeatedly with a pillow of some sort. For such a tiny woman, she certainly had the tall young man fairly cowed. Quatre couldn't help but chuckle. He felt Sally lean over his shoulder.

"Be glad you aren't Duo right now." She said with a smirk on her face as she shook her head and went back to her sewing.

"It's just a pillow, I think he'll survive." Quatre said grinning and resting his cheek against the sill as he watched the troupe meander about while they waited for Heero to fix Duo's wagon.

A knock came to the wagon door and a dark and handsome young man, with almond shaped, dark brown, nearly black eyes appeared as the door opened. "Sally, sorry to disturb you. It seems Duo's busted an axle as well. We're making camp here, it's going to take Heero a while to get it fixed. There's a village just up the way; Trowa's going to barter some herbs with the local healer. Do you have any finished garments you want me to barter?" The young man asked nodding his head toward Quatre in greeting.

"Yes, in the basket under our bed love are the barter goods. Wufei, this is Quatre. Quatre, my husband Wufei." Sally said introducing the young man and Quatre smiled and took Wufei's offered hand.

"Pleasure. Welcome to the clan Quatre. I pray you find happiness here as I did." Wufei said sincerely and Quatre smiled.

"I am already happier than I have been in a very long time. Thank you." Quatre said, as his smile grew ever brighter as Trowa appeared in the door. "Good Day Trowa!" Quatre greeted, sitting up brightly in bed. Trowa smiled.

"You look much better." Trowa said pulling up a chair. "The village up ahead is Winner Clan..." Trowa began, and was going to ask if it was Quatre's old village, but never got the chance before Quatre reacted. He didn't need to ask, it was. Quatre looked white as a sheet.

"Oh Gods. Don't take Sally's clothes there! Free People aren't welcome. Don't go!" Quatre said horrified.

"I suspected as much." Trowa said shaking his head. "We'll steer clear. Don't fret Quatre you're not one of them anymore." Trowa said taking Quatre's hand in his own as reassurance, offering a tender smile.

"If they find out I'm here, and that you saved me from my sentence, they'll..." Quatre continued, his distress evident in his voice. Trowa shushed him with a finger to his lips.

"I said don't fret Quatre. You are part of us now. No one will hurt you I promise. And don't worry about us either. We stand as one, we survive as one, and we live as one. We'll all be fine." Trowa said squeezing Quatre's hand gently. "Now, I made you a promise earlier. What is your sister's name again Quatre? I might as well see her myself since I am so close." Trowa asked and Quatre sighed.

"Iria. But do be careful, I don't want you hurt on my account." Quatre pleaded with his eyes and Trowa leaned over and gently kissed his cheek.

"I am always careful." Trowa said standing to leave. Quatre's hand lifted to his cheek where Trowa's kiss still tingled and a rosy hue decorated his cheeks. Trowa just smiled and left without another word.

Quatre was numb, and a stupid grin spread across his features as he melted into his pillows, his hand still resting on the spot Trowa kissed.

"Oh Gods how CUTE!" Sally squealed then leaned over Quatre to stick her head out the window to holler at Hilde. "YOU MISSED IT HIL!"

"MISSED WHAT?!" Hilde hollered back.

"LOVER BOY TROWA IN ACTION! WHAT A SMOOTH BASTARD! ONE PECK AND QUATRE HERE IS MUSH!" Sally announced loud enough where practically the entire camp could hear her screeching at Hilde the news of Quatre's kiss from Trowa.

"Aw, Damn it!" Hilde said as Sally crawled back in the window.

"Sally, you are awful woman. Look at the color you turned Quatre. I don't think that shade of red is even natural." Wufei said shaking his head at his wife before sparing Quatre an apologetic smile. "Forgive her, she's full of class... All third." Wufei muttered and only got a throw pillow launched at him.

"Oh shut up. Tell me you aren't happy to see Trowa like this 'Fei." Sally grumbled and Wufei shook his head.

"No, I am happy to see him as animated as he is, but woman shouting their business out the window?" Wufei threw the pillow back at her just as Anastas came bolting through the door.

"Okay sunshine, I want details!" Ana said grinning from ear to ear.

Quatre just groaned and crawled under the blankets.

Sally had to fill Ana in on the details; Quatre wasn't about to show his face, ever again. He was more than embarrassed.

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The village was like a fortress; a huge wall surrounded it. Trowa mused it was to keep the people IN, rather than to keep out anybody. Gods knew had he had to face the kind of society with in, he'd bolt the first chance he got.

He carried a basket of herbs and medicinal supplies with him; he might as well trade with Iria as well since he was here. It also gave him a valid excuse to get into the village. Free People may have been outcast, but healers were healers, they got special passage into almost any place on the planet.

"State your business Gypsy!" Came the harsh voice on the other side of the gate.

"I am Healer Barton. I have rare medicines in which to barter with your healer Iria." He said showing the contents of his basket to the gatekeeper.

"Lady Iria did not give word of your coming." He spat back and Trowa shook his head.

"She knows not of my coming. I am here unexpectedly." Trowa answered, calm, quiet and reserved.

"I'll fetch her, wait here Gypsy." The guardsman said leaving Trowa outside the gates.

The guard returned with a graceful woman, dressed all in black by his side. A veil of mourning draped over her face.

"She said she knows of no Healer Barton." The guard spat and the woman sighed.

"I can speak for myself. I'm sorry, but your name does not ring a bell." She said and Trowa smiled.

"No it wouldn't, we have never met. We have a mutual acquaintance. He told me I'd find you here. May I speak with you? I have some news as well as medicine to share with you Madam Healer." Trowa asked, his eyes urgently requesting her askance.

She suddenly grabbed her robes by her heart and nodded. "Please let him in Mr. Mueller." She asked then immediately took Trowa's arm. "This way healer Barton. My healer's cottage is this way." She said practically dragging Trowa along behind her.

Once inside she slammed the door and bolted it, then turned to face Trowa ripping her veil off. "Tell me its Quatre!" She whispered excitedly. Trowa smiled and nodded.

"Aye, he lives. I told him I would come here and set your mind at ease." Trowa said and Iria broke down in sobs, throwing her arms around Trowa's neck.

"Oh thank the Gods, my prayers have been answered! Healer Barton how is he?" She asked as Trowa passed her his colorful handkerchief.

"He's battered and bruised and a bit crushed in spirit. But he will be fine. He seems happy enough to be with us now. He has been adopted into our clan." Trowa said smiling and sitting on a stool as Iria sat on her worktable.

"Really? Isn't he a little old?"

"Yes and No. He is special, he has the bardic gift and will be trained by his new father's to use it properly." Trowa said handing Iria his basket to sort through as they talked.

"Have you heard Quatre sing yet?" She asked rummaging in the basket.

"No, not yet. I hope to hear him soon though. His speaking voice is quite beautiful, I can only imagine what he will sound like singing." Trowa said looking out the window momentarily.

"He's divine. I shall miss his voice." Iria said pulling out a few bags from Trowa's basket then going for her surplus supply to trade with Trowa.

"He is nearby for the night. If you wish to come see him and tell him farewell, it can be arranged." Trowa said as Iria handed him her items for trade. Trowa began to sort through the items as Iria paced the floor.

"If only I could. I am already under watch from our father. He knows I disapproved of Quatre's punishment and is waiting until he's sure in his mind Quatre is dead before allowing me out of this village." Iria said angrily as she paced.

"Afraid you'd go heal him?" Trowa asked and Iria nodded.

"I would have. But even I thought Quatre was dead by now. Shows how much I know. He's much stronger than even I thought." Iria said and Trowa Quirked an eyebrow.

"How long has he been out there?" Trowa asked and nearly fell off his stool when Iria told him.

"Ten days."

"TEN DAYS? By the Gods! I only found him yesterday, and today he is almost ready to bounce out of bed." Trowa said aghast and Iria laughed.

"That's Quatre for you. He's willful to a fault, if he does not want to die, he won't." She said with a wink and Trowa smiled.

"And here I thought he had given up when I spoke with him at first. I am mistaken." Trowa said selecting a few of Iria's bags in trade, taking his basket back and placing his items within.

"Oh don't get me wrong Healer Barton. Quatre has this horrible trait of blaming himself for everything. He probably did think he deserved his fate. He just didn't like it, so fought back despite his guilt. He's like that, he would rather live with the guilt, than take the easy way out and die. If you let him, he'll carry his guilt, your guilt, my guilt; some stranger's down the road, your third cousin twice removed, and the man in the moon's guilt too. Don't let him do it healer. It's a very bad habit of his that I have never been able to break. And I've tried. Father made him that way, perhaps away from him, Quatre can be just Quatre." Iria said and Trowa nodded.

"I will try. But from what you told me of his character, he seems stubborn." Trowa chuckled and Iria smiled.

"Very. You'll have your hands full with him Healer."

"I do hope so." Trowa said with a small smile. Iria beamed.

"I thought so. You are more than just his healer."

"I hope to be. I promise to take care of him for you." Trowa said holding out his hand. Iria slapped it away and hugged him instead.

"Thank you. Hug him for me, and tell him I love him." Iria asked and Trowa nodded.

"I will. If we ever come this way again, I will make sure he gets a chance to see you." Trowa said and Iria smiled and nodded.

"I will look forward to it, brother healer." Iria said kissing Trowa's cheek.

"It is a promise then." Trowa said, returning her small affectionate gesture before leaving to make his way back to camp.

He never noticed the guard had waited for him just outside Iria's open window.

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It was just past midday when Trowa returned to camp to see Quatre sitting outside in a stack of cushions beside a fire as Dimitri and Anastas cooked their meal and just sat bonding as a family in the warm sun. Trowa smiled at the scene, each of them were full of smiles for each other, Trowa almost hated to interrupt.

Almost.

“TROWA!” Quatre called out lifting his hand in warm welcome, before pulling the blanket that slipped off his shoulders back into place.

Trowa chuckled and sat down beside Quatre on the ground. “Your sister is thrilled and said to tell you to be happy and she loves you.” Trowa said taking Quatre’s hand to just hold. Quatre’s fingers curling around and interlacing with his own sent pleasant shivers up his arm.

“Did she look well?” Quatre asked and Trowa nodded.

“She did, all is well with her. And I promised her if ever we come back this way, we’ll arrange for you two to see each other.” Trowa said and Quatre turned to hug Trowa as he cried happy tears into his shoulder.

“Thank you Trowa, for everything. Thank you all.” Quatre said sniffing and laughing and trying to remain composed. He was failing miserably, but no one seemed to mind that he was crying at the drop of a hat these days. He never cried so much, he just couldn’t help it in his current situation.

“Don’t even think about it son. No thanks are necessary. It’s just the right thing to do, so we do it. You’ll learn that the longer you are with us sunshine.” Dimitri said, picking up Ana’s nickname for Quatre. It seemed a good one, and it did rather fit their new son. Ana was always giving people nicknames that stuck.

Ana grinned and gestured with his eyes for Dimitri to look at Quatre’s hand, which was entwined once more in Trowa’s, larger, sun darkened one. Dimitri smiled and made no comment as he began dishing up the stew he was making into bowls. He did however meet Ana’s eyes, and threatened in a look, telling his ornery lover not to mess with them.

Like Ana ever listened?

“Sooooooo? Tell me Trowa, since Quatre lips are locked. What’s this I hear of you kissing my son?” Ana purred and Quatre looked about ready to run had he the strength to get up, and had Trowa not increased his grip on his hand.

“ANA!” Dimitri barked in a growl. “You’ll be the death of us all one of these days!” Dimitri said shoving a bowl in his lover’s hands. Ana just laughed.

“Only having fun my love.” Ana cooed grinning innocently.

Trowa just shook his head. “It was innocent I assure you papa.” Trowa said as Dimitri handed him a bowl to pass to Quatre. “See.” Trowa said kissing Quatre’s other cheek as he pressed the bowl into Quatre’s hands.

Quatre was stunned, but happy, as once again he seemed to melt from the warmth in Trowa’s kiss. Eating however was going to be a problem, seeing as a thousand butterflies had suddenly taken up residence in his stomach.

“YOU MISSED IT AGAIN HIL!” Sally called out from her spot on the wagon stairs as she just took a break from sewing to eat for herself.

“Aw, Damn it!” Hilde’s voice from somewhere across the road called out in reply.

Three men erupted into laughter around Quatre, who once more buried himself under his blankets. Trowa lifted a corner and peeked at the blonde hiding underneath.

“You’ll get used to it.” Trowa said with a wink.

“Not bloody likely!” Was Quatre’s only response; and it only served to make the men around him howl and laugh even harder, which didn’t seem possible.

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After lunch Trowa left to explore the immediate area to see what herbs he could collect while he had plenty of daylight left to do so, and Quatre was helped back inside the wagon to nap for a while.

The camp was rather quiet, with people taking a relaxing day. All except Heero who was fixing Duo’s wagon. Hilde had returned to her post next to Sally to make Quatre’s clothes while Ana and Dimitri sat outside the wagon. Dimitri tinkering with a new instrument quietly, as Ana softly sat beside him strumming a gentle melody on his lute.

It was a rather tranquil setting, so when the thundering of hooves approached, it set everyone on guard.

Six riders came rushing down the road, hell bent for leather, riding into the middle of the camp and stopping abruptly in a cloud of dust. Quatre sat bolt upright in bed. “Oh NO!”

“By order of Lord Winner, you are ordered to turn over the sinner you carry with you. No punishment shall befall you if you hand him over immediately. It is assumed you knew not of his heresy and did the charity expected of those who walk under the heavens. If you do not give up the sinner to face his judgment, you will share in it by order of Lord Winner.” The leader of the group called out, reading off a parchment he held in his hands.

“Fuck.” Ana said setting his lute down and walking up, bold as brass, to the rider a-horseback.

“No.” Ana said folding his arms across his chest. The rider raised his eyebrows.

“What?”

“You fucking heard me. N-O, No. There is no sinner here.” Ana said defiantly, Dimitri walking up behind his brave and probably very foolish lover.

“Quatre Winner is here, we’ve been told...”

“No, Quatre WINNER is not here. I have a son named Quatre and he is not going anywhere.” Ana said as the rider’s horse shifted nervously.

“Search the wagons!” The leader called out as the rest began moving towards the wagons.

Suddenly a voice called out. “NO! Don’t be stupid!”

All heads turned to see a figure wrapped in blankets, stumble and stagger his way towards the riders.

“Quatre, go back inside, you’re not well son.” Ana said moving quickly to aid Quatre before he fell.

“No, don’t do this. Thank you, I appreciate it, but I am not worth it.” Quatre said pushing Ana away feebly.

“Sunshine...”

"No, please." Quatre begged as Ana once more tried to protect him and hold him back. "Please, don't. I love you already very much; I can't see this happen to you too. Thank you for everything, I will never forget you." Quatre said, fighting the tears as he faced the guards his father had sent to retrieve him.

"I will go back, please don't hurt these people Mueller." Quatre begged and Mueller nodded.

"We won't, but they should leave, lest your father change his mind." Mueller said and Quatre nodded turning to Dimitri and Ana who stood, anger welling in their faces.

"Please don't be sad or angry. I've never felt such joy as I have known it here with you. You gave me a great gift, and I shall die happy." Quatre said as the guards came up behind him and threw him in wrist shackles.

"Nooooooooooooooooo!" Came Trowa's voice as he bolted out of the woods full speed. His herbs scattered as he dropped the basket and ran to Quatre's side.

"Trowa stop please!" Quatre cried out. The tears now coming in torrents as his eyes met Trowa's.

"Quatre don't be a fool! They'll kill you!" Trowa cried out, tears marring his own face as Dimitri stopped his forward motion.

"I know Trowa. It's my sentence and it's my punishment. This I cannot and will not share with you, you gave me more joy in one day than I have had in a lifetime. Thank you Trowa, and for what it is worth, I love you for all that you've done and all that you intended." Quatre said walking over in his chains, raising up on his toes, to place a kiss against Trowa's lips.

A strangled sob escaped Trowa lips as he crushed Quatre in an embrace, refusing to let go. "No DAMN IT, NO! I won't let you do this Quatre." Trowa said angry and hurt.

"Trowa, please. Would you risk your whole clan for me?"

"Yes."

Quatre hung his head and sighed. "Then it's you who are foolish, not I Trowa." Quatre said lifting pained eyes to gaze into Trowa's.

"But... Quatre!"

"No buts Trowa. We had only a day, it's all we were meant to have it seems. Think of Sally, of Hilde, of Catherine... would you trade their happiness for mine? I won't let you do it, because I love you all too much to allow you to do it." Quatre said sobbing now and turning toward Mueller. "Let's go." He choked out and felt the chains around his wrists be lifted and hooked onto the pommel of Mueller's saddle.

"Forgive me Quatre. Your father's orders." Mueller said heavy with regret as he kicked his heels into his horses flanks and an entire troupe watched in abject horror as Quatre was dragged by his wrists, his body bouncing and floundering in the dirt as he was brutally taken from the camp.

Trowa's gut twisted and he let out a mournful sob as he fell to his knees in the dirt. Quatre's cries of pain echoing off the trees. "QUATRE!" He wailed, dry heaves arresting him where he collapsed in the road.

"OH I DON'T FUCKING THINK SO!" Catherine spat throwing a frying pan at the dust cloud left behind by the guard as they rode off.

“AMEN!” Came Hilde’s outraged cry.

“HOW DARE THEY THREATEN US IN ORDER TO TAKE QUATRE LIKE THAT!” It was Sally’s turn to spit and rage.

“Trowa get off your knees! We will get him back!” Wufei said as Dimitri walked past in a fury, Anastas by his side.

“Fucking right we get him back! NOBODY ABUSES MY SON!” Dimitri said in a rage grabbing a sword from his wagon on strapping it on his waist. Anastas armed with his lyre.

From every wagon came a man armed and a woman ready for battle.

“We stand as one, we survive as one, and we live as one. You told him that Trowa, now PROVE IT!” Sally said handing him a sword.

Trowa snatched it with grim determination and raced to join Dimitri and Anastas at the head of the large procession heading toward the Winner Clan village to get back their clansman Quatre who had been stolen from them.

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CHAPTER FOUR:

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Quatre had never felt more pain in his young life as he felt after being dragged by his arms back to the village. He'd passed out from the excruciating torture before they'd ever made it back, and he had awakened, naked, cold, bleeding, and unable to move where he lay on the freezing stone masonry of his father's cellar. He blinked in the darkness, and couldn't even react as he felt a rat walk over his feet.

For the first time in his life, Quatre wanted to die. He hurt too much, and the pain that hurt most was not from the wounds littering his young body. "Trowa." Quatre whispered as silent tears trickled down his cheek. He'd be weeping at his loss of Trowa he had the strength. All he could do was silently whimper in the darkness.

Quatre drifted in and out of consciousness, the occasional angry voice from the floors above filtering down in a muffled haze. He could hear his name once or twice, but everything else was lost in the fog of his pain-riddled mind.

Suddenly light assaulted him as the door swung open with a bang and he was heaved up by his hair. A strangled grunt was all the more sound he could make. "You will show the others what happens to sinners. I tried to give you your dignity, it seems I was too lenient on such a blasphemous boy." His father spat dragging Quatre up the stairs cursing him as he fell repeatedly in the process.

His ankle was surely broken, it felt like it at least when Quatre stumbled again and tried to keep himself from falling back down the stairs.

The tears wouldn't stop, even though he felt numb now, his face was soaked with them, as he was grabbed by his father's colleagues and shuffled and kicked and shoved, still naked, out into the town square. Where a host of people pelted him with rotten fruit and eggs as he was placed in the stocks in the center of the Village Square.

Shouts of blasphemy and outrage assailed his ears; the sting of citrus acid from spoiled fruit burned him as it splattered and ran into his open wounds, the curses of the righteous and pious condemning him to all the hells.

He was already there.

"Stop this! This is QUATRE! He's no sinner!" A voice he loved and recognized cut through the noise of the crowd. Desperate, sorrow filled and indignant with passion and anger. Iria, blessed Iria, still fighting for him, even though the end was so very near.

"Shut up Iria! Do not be blinded and tempted by the devil himself!" His father howled standing beside Quatre and grabbing his hair to lift his face to the people.

"Devil? The only Devil I see here is YOU FATHER! His only crime was to sing a lullaby or hum a tune in the darkness. His voice only offered light and love how blind can you be?" Iria wailed and the crowd began to quiet.

"It is forbidden! He willfully broke the laws time and time again! But his music is only part of the devil before you! He is no man, but a beast! Drawn to other men with wicked intent!" His father preached and another rotten vegetable splattered against the stocks next to Quatre's face.

"SO WHAT? I cannot see how love can be so wicked!" Iria cried out and Quatre sobbed. Her blasphemous words would condemn her too.

“Stop Iria. Please.” Quatre muttered and his father backhanded him across the mouth.

“Silence demon!” He hissed then turned to Iria. “And you, willful girl! Has this demon corrupted you so much you turn your back on the gods in this fashion?” The father asked and Iria folded her arms across her chest.

“No, it’s your corruption of all that is good under the heavens I question. Wife beater, Son murder, crooked leader, and alcoholic! Much worse crimes you commit every day in the name of all that is holy. It is you who are a heretic and will burn in all the nine hells for it!” Iria shouted.

“Blasphemy! Seize the she-demon!” Their father cried out and Quatre wailed from the stocks. His eyes burning with newly awakened vigor. How dare they do this to his beloved sister, it was they who were wrong. The entire clan was bound to the hells under their father’s rule. Their father was the demon.

Quatre took as deep a breath as he could, and focused all his rage and betrayal and love for his sister into his voice and released a single note from his lips, sharp, shrill, and powerful. His father dropped to his knees grabbing his ears as blood trickled from them through his fingers. The entire clan began writhing on the ground in pain as Quatre’s note resounded from where he was bound before them. Iria was unaffected and in horror, she fled the scene and ran toward the gates. She needed to find Trowa and his clan, only they could save Quatre now by stopping him.

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They were nearing the village at a fast pace when Ana gasped and grabbed his ears. “NO QUATRE!” He cried, the silver and gold hoops fastened to his ears began to glow.

“What is it Ana?” Dimitri and Trowa asked simultaneously.

“He’s making a huge mistake. He’s desperate, and is terrified. Not for himself, but for someone else. He’s using his gifts to kill.” Ana said as he broke out in a run, Dimitri, Trowa and the rest trying their best to keep up with his frantic pace.

“How do you know this?” Dimitri asked as they ran.

“I gave him my apprentice rings. They are tied to the master’s earrings, which I now wear. They pass from student to teacher and have done for generations. When Quatre is a master, he will remove the rings and take these earrings. Giving his rings to his student in turn. That is how it works, how the master will always know what his apprentice is doing, right or wrong.” Ana explained as the village came into view. A young woman racing out of the gates and heading straight toward them.

“IRIA!” Trowa cried as he recognized the woman before them.

“OH GOD! They are all mad! Quatre is... Quatre is... HELP ME!” She said in terror and panic.

“We know.” Ana said turning to the others. “No one else come in yet. I must stop Quatre alone or he will affect all of you too. Wait for me to call you!” Ana said turning and with strength that belied his years, Ana raced toward his son and apprentice.

Trowa began to follow and Dimitri grabbed him. “Boy don’t be a fool!” He growled physically restraining Trowa from following.

“Quatre NEEDS ME!” Trowa shouted fighting Dimitri. Who hauled back and punched Trowa in the gut, knocking the wind out of him and sending him to his knees.

"Quatre does need you, and he needs you alive. You have no idea what that boy is capable of! Ana will deal with it. You WILL wait." Dimitri ordered as Trowa heaved to catch his breath. "If Quatre can kill with his gift, while wearing the dampening apprentice rings, then he is even stronger than Ana. Quatre is desperate, he's in pain, and he's acting on survival instinct alone now. We wait here until Ana can get the situation under control." Dimitri said turning to the frantic woman beside them.

"Just what IS my brother?" She asked and Dimitri sighed.

"He's a bardic mage. And an unstable, untrained one. He is extremely dangerous. He should have been receiving training since he was an infant. Such rouge power, in such abundance, is a disaster waiting to happen." Dimitri said, his voice strained with worry for both his son and his lover who would face him alone.

"I thought bardic mages were a myth." Iria gasped and Dimitri shook his head.

"No they exist, just thankfully in very small numbers. Ana is one of only four that I know about, five including Quatre. Most die before they ever reach an age to understand their gifts. Using them, like Quatre, in situations of extreme trauma. Quatre might very well kill himself in the process." Dimitri said pacing the dirt track in worry.

"I had no idea." Trowa said and Dimitri smiled at Trowa.

"You weren't supposed to. And you will forget you know the truth. It takes years of dedication and control to overcome their gifts. It is a great temptation for them just as it is a blessing. Only men strong of will and character can curb their desires enough to use their gifts only when they are desperately needed. The power wants to be used, and only by denying the urge to use it, do they ever become masters of their calling." Dimitri said his eyes searching for any sign of Ana.

"Quatre is strong enough. He has survived untrained into manhood. A feat that shocked even Ana. Quatre will be a legend if he survives this trial." Dimitri said no small hint of fatherly pride coloring his words.

"Oh Quatre." Iria sobbed, turning into Dimitri's outstretched arms.

"A sister's love I think is what helped him. You, I believe are more his mother than his sibling." Dimitri said as Iria nodded and sobbed. She'd raised Quatre since their mother's death at his birth. Sister and mother in one, And she had been only ten years old when Quatre became her responsibility and her treasure.

"If he's so strong why wasn't I affected?" She asked and Dimitri shrugged.

"I do not know. I can only guess. Did his reaction have something to do with a threat to you?" Dimitri asked and Iria gasped.

"Oh Gods! YES! This is all my fault!" Iria cried even harder and Dimitri just held her in a comforting gesture.

"No. It's his love for you. And if he loves that deeply, there is hope. I'm sure Quatre will not fail this test." Dimitri said as he held Iria to his huge barrel of a chest while Trowa took up the pacing Dimitri had abandoned in favor of comforting a distraught Iria.

"Please Quatre. I know you can survive. You're the strongest man I have ever known." Trowa said softly in a plea that went unheard by the others as it drifted on the breeze.

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Ana's heart pounded in his chest, his ears burning where his master's earrings were glowing white-hot with urgency. Even with the dampening effects of the rings he'd placed on Quatre's fingers, Quatre's power was enormous. And before he could hear he note, he felt his ears begin to bleed.

He threw up stronger shields and found more strength within his no longer young body, to reach his son before it was too late.

People everywhere were writhing in agony; he had to hurry, for their sake as well as Quatre's. He rounded a corner and his heart froze. There in the center of the square was Quatre. Hanging from the stocks, his head raised where it was encased around his neck in the wooden prison. His fists clenched in rage where they too were housed in the humiliating wooden nightmare. The rest of his body was hanging limp from the contraption, bloodied, beaten, bruised and barely alive in the emaciated frame.

He was howling his despair and was lost in the terror that gripped him and had sent him over the edge in frantic desperation.

"QUATRE! SILENCE NOW!" Ana sang out in a shouted counterpoint harmony to Quatre's shrill sustained note.

Nothing, Quatre was functioning purely on instinct. His body too weak, his will too battered to hear. So Ana walked over and sobbed as he slapped Quatre hard across the face.

"LISTEN TO ME MY SON! STOP THIS NOW!" Ana sang again and a slight waver in tone occurred, but it wasn't enough so Ana slapped him again, even though it broke his heart to raise a hand to his already beloved son.

"Please my son, hear me. Stop, it is over. You need not protect anyone anymore." Ana sang a softer melody, bending to kiss the cheeks of his beloved son that were saturated with tears, and red from his slaps.

"Please, sunshine. Enough now." Ana cooed softly with his ears still bleeding heavily as he stroked and kissed Quatre's face.

The note began to fade, and Quatre gasped and sputtered. "That's right sunshine. Stop now; fight your way back. You hear me, Papa is here." Ana sang again, pouring all his love for Quatre into the notes, praying fervently to reach the subconscious of the young man he claimed as his own.

The note finally died, and Quatre's entire form shook once violently as he let go of his song and fell into a drained, near deathlike sleep.

Ana was sobbing as he ripped open the stocks and laid his son down on the platform. Stripping off his outer robe to wrap Quatre's naked body in as the villagers began to awaken from Quatre's punishing song. Ana took up his abandoned lute and struck a sharp, harsh discordance of sound on the instrument and light flared from the strings and a sonic boom echoed the light.

"That's our sign!" Dimitri said rushing forward, hot on the heels of Trowa who out paced them all in a rush to get to Quatre.

Ana was cradling the broken form in his arms, blood drying on his earlobes as he murmured a soft lullaby. Soothing and comforting Quatre where he struggled to live.

Beside them on the platform, the body of Quatre's father began to awaken. Ana shifted a foot, and in anger kicked him. "You have him no more to torture! Quatre is my son now, and you will never harm him again." Ana spat as the figure groaned.

"QUATRE!" Trowa cried as he saw him and blindly stumbled up to the platform where Ana held him.

"He lives, but only just. I can do no more for him. It is your turn now to save him." Ana sobbed as Trowa knelt beside them. Taking Quatre from Ana's arms and kissing him tenderly on the lips as he settled Quatre into his arms.

"I need to you fight Quatre. Harder than you have ever fought before. Stay with me, there's a whole world out there I've yet to show you." Trowa whispered picking up Quatre as Dimitri, Iria and the others reached the scene.

"Right, tend to the villagers! Before we can do anything we must tend to the wounded." Dimitri barked orders and everyone flew into action. "And you, who are the ones responsible for the events that brought on this calamity?" Dimitri asked Iria who systematically began pointing out her father and all his deacons of the village council. Listing all their multitude of sins in the name of the gods.

"Then we lock them up while we tend them." Dimitri said as Heero, Duo, Wufei and the rest of the men began carrying disoriented bodies into cottages set aside to hold prisoners apart from innocent victims.

Trowa carried Quatre to Iria's healer's cottage and laid him on the small cot in the corner. Where he flew into action, mixing and forcing medicine down Quatre's throat, then making a multitude of poultices to apply onto open wounds, and re-opened old ones. Wincing as he set the bones in Quatre's broken ankle before wrapping it securely in a splint. He checked Quatre from head to toe and back again, doing all he could to save the body and keep it going until Quatre's desire and will to live won the battle internally. All the while he spoke endearments to Quatre to encourage that will to surface.

"Quatre, I know you can't hear me. But your subconscious self can. Come back to me, please." Trowa begged and pleaded as his fingers worked themselves numb trying to restore and heal Quatre's haggard form.

"Trowa?" a breathy, almost inaudible voice spoke in detached wonder.

"Yes Quatre! It's me." Trowa cried cupping Quatre's face in his hands as his eyelids fluttered over glassy eyes. He was unable to focus on anything as they opened briefly.

"Trowa is that you? I can't see." Quatre asked, his voice raspy and his breath labored.

"Yes, hush now. Rest Quatre, I am here and I'm not going anywhere. You're safe. Iria is safe. Everyone will be all right. Just sleep now and get well." Trowa soothed, running fingers through Quatre's matted hair. A sigh of relief escaping Quatre's lips as Trowa continued to offer comfort with gentle touches.

"What happened? I don't remember..." Quatre began and Trowa laid a finger on his lips.

"Do shut up and sleep Quatre. You stubborn fool. I'll tell you later." Trowa said leaning over to place a kiss on Quatre's lips.

Quatre sighed and a small smile spread across his face as he tried to focus on Trowa's face. His vision blurred, all he could make out was a vague figure with dark auburn streaked brown hair. "I love you." Quatre said as his eyes drooped with fatigue.

"I love you too. Now sleep, that's not a request Quatre, but an order." Trowa said as thankful tears dripped down his cheeks. Quatre was indeed the strongest man he knew. He would live. Quatre was too damn stubborn to die.

Quatre only smiled as he succumbed to slumber again, his body too weak to fight without much needed rest. Trowa pulled the blankets up around Quatre then settled in beside him on the floor. Ready for anything Quatre might need.

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It took several hours of care and questioning, but soon the villagers began to come around. The Free Peoples exhausted themselves in trying to care, mend, and sort out the mess this village was suffering.

With Iria's aide, Dimitri sat with Ana at the council table. Interviewing villagers, questioning everyone in hopes of trying to determine what their next course of action should be. It seemed most of the villagers lived in fear of Lord Winner and his council. Blindly following him as their spiritual leader.

The list of atrocities grew exponentially. Ana was livid where he sat listening to the horrors Winner had put his people through. Wufei sat beside them, a scowl on his face that grew ever more furious the longer they listened.

Duo paced the floor, muttering and swearing in a multitude of languages, Heero sat in stony silence, his eyes betraying his anger, as they sat in council to decide what to do to help the village and set it right once more.

"I say hang the bastard by his balls from the nearest tree and let nature decide his fate." Duo spat kicking over a chair.

Ana chuckled. "I agree with Duo."

"You two aren't helping!" Dimitri growled but grinned. "Even if the notion does sound entertaining."

"I say we appoint a new council and let them deal with their own trash." Wufei suggested and Dimitri nodded.

"I agree, But who do we appoint? The only one here with any sense is Iria." Dimitri said and Heero sighed.

"It will be tough for a woman, but not impossible. She's strong, she's competent, let her choose her own council." Heero said as Duo flopped into a chair beside Heero.

"But a sadly Iria is a woman. She's not going to have a lot of respect. Not in this ass-backwards village at least. It's going to take more than her mind to win these people over." Duo said and Wufei snorted.

"Never underestimate the power of a woman. Last I noticed your wife is half your size Maxwell and can pummel you into submission quite easily." Wufei said smirking and Duo laughed.

"Yeah, look who's talking. Sally whips your butt pretty good too." Duo retorted grinning.

Quatre knew this beyond doubt as Trowa's voice occasionally filtered its way through the fog encasing Quatre's mind as he slept and regained his strength.

Words whispered to a sleeping body were heard and bolstered Quatre on a much deeper level. Words of affection, promises of everlasting devotion, a scolding from a worried youth to the foolish man he loved. All of these small gestures of love and concern reached him, and Quatre grasped them and held them close to his heart.

"I'm coming Trowa, and I will never leave you again." Quatre thought as the fog of sleep pulled its shroud tighter around him as his body still struggled to mend.

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The wedding was postponed until the village was once more on its feet and Quatre awakened. The troupe moved their wagons into the town square as the Free People took the Villagers by the hand and led them out of the darkness they'd been living in for so long.

Lord Winner and his council were tended to, and then banished from the village forever. A kinder fate than they deserved according to many, but Ana knew this would be how Quatre would want it to be. A death sentence was not something the Free People believed in, fate could be cruel enough on its own. And for five men who knew nothing but opulence and the spoils of wealth who now faced a life of poverty and living off the land by their own two hands seemed a rather just punishment.

If death were indeed to be their sentence from the Gods, then they would fail to survive on their own. If a stronger fate and punishment awaited them, they would struggle every day just to survive, a fitting end to a treachery that spanned a lifetime. None of these men had youth on their side anymore, and the world was cruel to men past their prime. Ana stood with Dim and Iria at the villages gates as they watched five men argue and rage and rip at each other's throats as they disappeared beyond the horizon.

"They'll kill each other before the week is out." Ana said turning to Iria. "How you have turned out as kind and level headed as you are my dear I shall never understand." He said and Iria smiled.

"I had Quatre. He was my proof and my example to draw from. In comparison to our father, it was easy to see how one should be." Iria said proudly and Ana smiled.

"Aye, he's a source of light indeed." Dimitri said with awed pride as the trio turned back toward the village, shutting the gates on the darkness forever.

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Quatre opened his eyes and blinked as the light from the window assaulted him. "Ah, Sunshine, welcome back." Ana's voice said as he leaned over Quatre's bed to smile down upon his son.

Quatre returned the smile as Ana settled on the edge of the bed. "What happened? All I remember is I panicked. Then you were there." Quatre asked and Ana smoothed Quatre's hair off his brow.

"You did panic. But for your sister's well being, not for your own. You almost did a very foolish thing, but it is understandable considering your state of health, both physical and mental. I am just glad fate had me here to protect you from yourself." Ana said taking Quatre's hand in his own. "As I will always be here to guide you until the day I replace these..." Ana began, turning the rings on Quatre's fingers, "...with these." Ana said tugging on the earrings in his ears.

"The day you gain these Quatre, you will have surpassed your teacher. As it was with my master, and me, as it was with my master before me and so forth and so on. One day it will be you who will pass these rings on to another and then when he surpasses you, you will give him the master's earrings." Ana said as Quatre listened intently.

"It was no mistake you and I met Quatre. The son will always call to the father, and the father will always come. There are ever only five of us Quatre. When one dies, another is born to take his place. We are all the same, and our sons are never of our own bodies. It is quite difficult to gain a son of the flesh being born, predisposed to other men as we are." Ana added with a wink and Quatre chuckled with his understanding.

"It's just the way this power works Quatre. It chooses us before we are born, and molds us as it sees fit. If it chooses a weaker man, the power will end up consuming him before he reaches maturity. If it chooses a man too strong and without frailty, the power is controlled and great strife spreads rampant. It is a balance that must be found between power and human strength." Ana continued, explaining exactly who Quatre was and why he felt the way he did.

"You and I sunshine, look at us. Neither of us could be considered 'robust'." Ana said chuckling at his own slight frame. "What we lack in physical stature, we make up for in other ways. We grow strong within, rather than without. This power makes us this way in part; it draws much from us that no one will fully understand. It just is, accept it and move on as my master told me." Ana said still toying with the rings on Quatre's hands.

"My master died nineteen years ago, on the eve of the summer solstice. The day you were born. I find it prophetic to be the one chosen to father and train and remind my former master and father who he is." Ana said laughing and Quatre just lay there, his eyes half lidded with awakening recognition and understanding. "I'm my own Grandfather!" Ana said with a burst of laughter. Quatre smiling and softly giggling along with him.

"Ana, with you things are never normal." Dim said walking into the room and leaning over to kiss Quatre's forehead before settling down on the floor beside the bed. "How do you feel sunshine?" He asked once seated.

"Tired, and probably not nearly as confused about all of this as I should be." Quatre said turning his head to smile at the large man seated beside him.

"Probably, but then again, your power is old, it will recognize things you do not." Dim said resting his chin on the bed to smile at his son. "Old power mixed with untried youth. I am eternally glad I am no longer young. And that Ana is no longer young for that matter. What a nuisance it is." Dim said chuckling.

"Amen. But then I do miss some things about our youth. Like being able to run as I did the other day, without waking to leg cramps in the middle of the night for one." Ana said with a groan and a wink at Quatre. "Or the stamina to go all night long..." Ana began then howled in pain as Dim pinched him, hard, to get him to shut up before he said something extremely rude.

"You're no fun." Ana said rubbing his arm where Dim had pinched him.

"And you're rude and uncouth. Let Quatre recover fully before you begin teasing him again."

"Where's the fun in that?" Ana said grinning at both Dim and Quatre.

"Why do I have a sudden dread to go anywhere with you?" Quatre asked Ana and Dim laughed heartily.

"Don't worry sunshine. I'll be there to keep Ana in line." Dim chuckled as Ana pouted at the foot of the bed.

"Why are all the men in my life such sticks in the mud?"

"Because you need us to keep you out of trouble." Dim said with a wink at Quatre. Grateful his son was of a sweeter disposition than his spouse, he at last had someone else to help him keep Ana in line and on good behavior.

And it was in this jovial state of affairs all conversation ground to a halt when the door opened and an uncharacteristic whimper of joy escaped the lips of the young man standing in the doorway.

"QUATRE!" Trowa cried out, nearly falling over Dimitri in his haste to reach the young blonde in bed.

"Trowa!" Quatre almost giggled his name as Trowa virtually collapsed on top of him. Arms held Quatre close as a face pressed into his small chest. Great heaves of bottled up fear began pouring out of Trowa in unstoppable waves as he sobbed uncontrollably with relief.

Quatre's name was repeated over and over again as Quatre wrapped his arms around Trowa and held him back. Small fingers combing Trowa's hair in a soothing gesture.

"I'm all right Trowa, I'm all right." Quatre reassured the weeping man in his arms. Ana nodded once to Dimitri and both men made a discreet exit. Trowa's emotions were bared for the world to see and for a private and quiet young man, even Ana knew it was best to just leave him be.

This side of Trowa was for Quatre's eyes only.

"I was so worried." Trowa sobbed moving up to place a myriad of kisses all over Quatre's face.

"I know, I heard you." Quatre sighed awash in the outpouring of Trowa's love for him.

"You did?"

Quatre only nodded with a soft smile on his lips as their eyes met.

"I love you. Don't you ever, and I mean EVER make me worry like this again." Trowa said gruffly planting his hands on either side of Quatre's face before he kissed him, hard.

Quatre was breathless before Trowa ceased his pleasant punishment. "Mmmmm, I might need more convincing." Quatre purred as Trowa released him and he sank deeper into his pillows. Every bone in his body turned to useless jelly.

"Oh, I'll give you convincing. Just wait until you are healed." Trowa threatened lightly with a smile of intent tugging on his lips as he moved up onto the bed, shifting Quatre so he could lay comfortably in Trowa's lap and arms.

"I do hope that is a promise." Quatre sighed, nestling into Trowa's body content to stay there forever.

"More than a promise Quatre. It's a commitment to always be by your side, if you'll have me." Trowa said laying a kiss on Quatre's forehead.

"I can't think of any place I'd rather be, than with you Trowa." Quatre said reaching up to bat Trowa's hair out of his glorious eyes.

“That makes two of us then.” Trowa said, kissing Quatre’s fingertips as they trailed down his face lovingly.

Quatre only sighed contentedly before drifting back to sleep, secure in his beloved’s embrace.

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CHAPTER FIVE:

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It was six weeks worth of constant care before Quatre was even remotely himself again. His small body had taken more abuse and strain than it could stand. It was sheer will power alone that pulled him back from death's door. That and the love for and of a certain handsome, young healer helped too.

It was the eve of the summer solstice, Quatre's twentieth birthday when he made his first trip outside under his own power. A very slight limp in his right foot that would forever be with him remained, it didn't hurt anymore, but he'd shattered his ankle, and Trowa had healed it as much as he could, but it was still a little crooked.

He sighed as he crossed the threshold of the door and the morning sun washed over him. Only to be scolded the moment he set foot outside. "Back in bed!"

Quatre scowled at Trowa. "No. I am sick to death of those four walls. I NEED out!" Quatre whined batting away Trowa's aide. "And quit hovering like a nanny goat. I feel fine." Quatre scolded back as he hobbled past Trowa and walked out into the front courtyard of Iria's home.

"You are still weak, Quatre."

"And I won't get stronger if you keep me cooped up inside." Quatre said turning to stick his tongue out at his beloved. Trowa frowned.

"You're so damn stubborn. Fine!" Trowa grumbled. "Just don't call me to help you up when you fall down. Don't say I didn't warn you."

"Worry wart."

"Test to my patience."

"Mother Hen"

"Spoiled Brat"

"Gorgeous Grump"

"...."

"Ha! I win!" Quatre chuckled winning yet another round of name calling, bending over to smell the roses that trailed up the walls of Iria's home. He felt Trowa slide up behind him and grip his hips, pressing himself against Quatre's backside.

"If you're feeling so spry this morning, and so eager to test me. I have a way to make you behave." Trowa purred sending shivers down Quatre's spine and instantly causing him to grow warm with desire.

"Oh really?" Quatre asked turning around and wrapping his arms around Trowa's neck. Pressing his body fully against Trowa, confirming his own echoing arousal, as their hips met and rubbed against each other.

Trowa's eyes rolled back in his head as he crushed Quatre against the wall, pinning him there as Trowa dove for that beautiful exposed neck. Devouring it in kisses.

“Ahem? Did we forget something Trowa?” Came Ana’s amused voice as he entered the small courtyard.

“Fuck.” Trowa grumbled softly into Quatre’s neck before turning around to face Ana. “What?!” Came out in a forced bark of annoyance. Quatre only laughed and hid his smile behind his hand.

“Whose sister is getting married in about twenty minutes? You don’t have time lover boy.” Ana said, a wicked grin spreading across his face. He loved seeing Trowa so frustrated and out of his mind with desire, it was quite entertaining. The boy was being a saint in the patience department. Had Ana had to wait for Dim as long in the same situation, he probably would have chewed through furniture by now in denied lust.

Quatre too for that matter, it was obvious the youth was annoyed at Trowa for waiting so long to do anything. Quatre had come close numerous times to just jumping Trowa to get him in his bed. Trowa however, would always be just out of reach. Ana was sure that given time, Quatre would grow weary of waiting and pounce. Ana had been right; he’d just caught the tail end of Quatre’s game of cat and mouse. Quatre seemed to be winning this time.

Well he had been winning until Ana had interrupted them in the middle of their game.

He felt sorry for them, but only just a little bit. It was too much fun prolonging their agony and denying their hormones. Ana could be a sadistic bastard when he wanted to be.

“Oh damn. I did forget!” Trowa said dashing off to clean up. Quatre rolled his eyes.

“Thanks a lot Papa, I owe you one.” Quatre said sarcastically, ‘papa’ rolling off his tongue as more of a curse than an endearment, as he hobbled toward the door. Ana cackled.

“Anytime sunshine!” He said chortling up the stairs behind his son a package under his arm. “Now get changed.” Ana said tossing the package on Quatre’s bed. “And for goodness sake, DO SOMETHING creative with your hair. You’re all shaggy.” Ana said looking radiant in green, his hair adorned with matching gems.

“What and walk around like a peacock like you do? There’s nothing wrong with my hair. EVERYONE has hair like I do.” Quatre said pulling on his new clothes.

“Precisely! Everyone is DULL! Sparkle sunshine, make Trowa BEG FOR IT.” Ana said oozing over Quatre’s shoulders to adjust the tunic ‘just right’.

“If you hadn’t have interrupted us, I wouldn’t have to make him beg.” Quatre scowled, pulling the neck back over his shoulder where Ana had tugged it to hang off provocatively.

“Oh so uptight Quatre. Tsk, Tsk.” Ana said exposing Quatre’s shoulder again.

“Quit fussing. I’ll let you do my hair, okay? Just leave the shirt alone. It’s a wedding, not a brothel we’re going to.” Quatre hissed and Ana laughed.

“Deal. Now sit sunshine, never disturb a master at work.” Ana said grabbing a comb and going to work.

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Quatre marveled at the transformation of his village. The stark white and black clothing was gone and instead color was everywhere. It seemed Hilde and Sally and a host of other women had been rather busy these past six weeks making new clothes for all the townspeople who reveled in the simple freedom of color.

Heero had been busy too and all the wagons had been overhauled and fixed. Fresh coats of paint on their surfaces making them gleam. And it seemed there was more than enough paint, and it had spread to some of the cottages as well. Things looked more alive than they ever had been.

People were laughing openly, young couples walked hand in hand without fear of showing their affection for one another anymore. Flowers were everywhere as the Village Square was decorated to celebrate Heero and Catherine's union.

Quatre hadn't realized he was crying until Ana pressed a handkerchief into his hand. "Thank you." Quatre said dabbing his eyes where joyful tears fell.

"You're such a romantic sunshine." Ana said chuckling as she met Dimitri in the square.

"Well, I guess I'm the cock of the walk. Look at you two, my oh my." Dimitri said as two beautifully dressed and adorned men joined him off to the side of the platform set up for the bride and groom, a small area had been sectioned off especially for the bards who would sing the blessings of the day for the couple. Ana tested his lute to make sure it was in tune as he settled into his seat. Beside him Dim had his hurdy-gurdy (1) set up and ready and propped up against the platform when he turned and handed a large and heavy bundle wrapped in canvas to Quatre.

"Happy Birthday son from both of us." Dim said as Quatre was pushed into a chair and the gift was laid in his lap.

"Oh it's heavy." Quatre said as he smiled and moved the canvas to stare, jaw agape, at his gift.

Moved to instant tears as he beheld the glorious instrument in his lap. "A Cimbalom! (2) How did you know I always wanted...? Oh, Thank you!" Quatre cried setting the instrument down reverently as he stood to hug both his fathers.

"You're welcome sunshine. Dim's been making it since you came to us. He always knows, that's how." Ana said wiping Quatre's tears with his sleeve.

"The instrument tells me what it wants to be when I tell it who it is for." Dim said pushing Quatre back in his chair. "Now breathe life into it boy. I can only house the soul, you must set it free again." Dim ordered handing Quatre the small padded hammers to use to strike the strings as he settled the instrument on his crossed legs to support it.

Quatre closed his eyes and let his hand go, and the music that fell from his soul as he brought life to the instrument brought Dim and Ana to their knees. Quatre had never touched an instrument in his life, and played his gift as if he'd been born with the hammers in his hands.

"And that is why to take music from Quatre is to kill his spirit." Ana sighed turning to see Trowa and a small crowd had gathered to listen to Quatre play.

"Amazing." Iria breathed, falling onto a bench in fascination.

"More than amazing, I think I'm going to cry." Sally said dabbing her eyes.

"Quatre, that was... Wow." Trowa said running a hand through his hair at a loss for words to describe how he felt. All he could offer was a sheepish grin in compliment since words had failed him.

"Thank you." Quatre blushed slightly, not used to such public praise. It was the first time he'd ever been allowed to make music in front of anyone before. Let alone the first time he had ever

touched an instrument let alone play one. He rather liked the giddy rush it gave him in the pit of his stomach.

“No, thank YOU sweet cheeks.” Catherine said leaning over Quatre’s shoulder to kiss his cheek. “Do keep playing, I want to walk up to met Heero to your music. Please?” Catherine asked and Quatre smiled and nodded.

“I would be honored.” Quatre said kissing her hand before bowing his head and turning back to play whatever his heart told him to play.

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The vow exchanging ceremony was short, but lovely. Trowa commented that that was the most Heero ever said in one go that he’d ever heard. As the proud brother gave his sister’s hand to his life long friend in marriage. Quatre was fighting tears the entire ceremony. Ana jibbing him repeatedly afterwards that he was a hopeless romantic as they set up to begin to play in earnest. The ceremony over, it was time now to celebrate the union in song, and dancing, and feasting.

Tables were set up everywhere in the square and littered with food as far as the eye could see. Every woman in the troupe and the village making her best dish to offer the happy newlyweds. The baker had baked a huge array of sweets and pastries and had decorated them in a dazzling array of colored icings. Quatre felt dizzy with the splendor. He’d never seen the like in all his life.

It seemed the entire village was not only celebrating a wedding, but also their freedom. “Damn it, stop crying Quatre!” He said to himself in irritation as he reached for his already wet handkerchief. Trowa saved the day by producing a dry one for Quatre out of his pocket, chuckling at his sentimental love.

“Happy tears are always good ones. I’m just afraid you’ll dehydrate.” Trowa teased as Quatre wiped his eyes, again.

“Me too if I keep these waterworks up.” Quatre chuckled tucking the cloth in his pocket as he hobbled along the tables eyeing the food.

“Gods, it all looks delicious. I just don’t know which table to start on.” Quatre said salivating as he gazed at the dishes available to choose from.

“Me either. Remind me later to make up a batch of bicarbonate of soda. I think after tonight, come morning we’re ALL going to need it to cure our bingeing aftermath.” Trowa chuckled picking up two plates as Quatre loaded them both up with food.

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“If I eat another bite I’ll burst!” Quatre moaned as he lay in the grass flat on his back. Feeling positively bloated with food. A groan next to him in the grass confirmed that ‘the pig who had a hollow leg named Trowa’ was also suffering from over eating.

“Quatre, will you play for us again?” a young girl from his village asked and Quatre smiled where he lay.

“As soon as I can get up again, it’s a promise.” He said waving after the girl who trotted off happily.

“I told you I wasn’t picking you up again.” Trowa teased, a smirk plastered on his face.

“So you did, so you did.” Quatre chuckled still prone in the grass.

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The celebration lasted well into the night, Ana, Dim, Quatre and whomever else could hold an instrument well enough to play got up taking turns to keep everyone entertained. Quatre had just finished another round when Trowa stole him away to dance. "Stand on my feet." He ordered and Quatre only protested a few times before he gave into Trowa. It was those puppy dog green eyes that made him cave at last.

He was glad he did, Trowa spun him around the square at an almost dizzying pace. He had to cling to Trowa's neck for dear life afraid of falling off his feet. Laughing every step of the way in merriment. They both were laughing hard as Ana purposefully sped up the pace of the song to keep Trowa busy, and trying to get the graceful bugger to trip and fall. "I'll beat you yet Barton! DANCE BOY DANCE!" (3)

No such luck, Trowa was too good, too graceful, too balanced, he knew where his feet were at all times. He was the product of his parents without a doubt. "Damn acrobat brat." Ana said in defeat as Trowa just smirked at him at the end of the dance and bowed in victory. First to the people applauding his stamina and skill, then to Ana who only gave him a rather rude, one fingered salute.

It was a few dances later when Ana began to wonder where Quatre and Trowa had gone. They had just seemed to disappear into the crowd and the darkness beyond the Village Square.

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Hand in hand Quatre led Trowa down the empty streets of his childhood home. Down a narrow footpath that led to a small lake that was reflecting the full moon it's glassy, still surface. It was tranquil and serene as they settled into the soft moss lining the banks. Quatre sighing as he laid his head on Trowa's shoulder "I always loved it here." He said as Trowa's arms wrapped around him.

"I can see why, it's beautiful here." Trowa said kissing Quatre's temple. "Thank you for sharing it with me."

"Thank you for giving me a reason to." Quatre said looking up at Trowa, the moonlight dancing in his eyes. Trowa smiled and reached into his breast pocket and pulled out a small bundle of emerald green silk tied with a sky blue bow.

"Happy Birthday Quatre." He said placing the gift in Quatre's hands.

"What is it?" Quatre asked, his eyes a glow with affection for Trowa.

"Open it and find out." Trowa said smiling as Quatre tugged the bow and let the silk fall away.

Nestled within was a ring fashioned out of smooth stone, in a color Quatre had never seen before. It's shades of blue and green melding together with thin veins of black mineral. It was absolutely beautiful. "I saw this in the jeweler's window. It reminded me of our eyes. How the colors mix well, just like us. The Jeweler called it turquoise." Trowa said picking the ring out of Quatre's palm and turning his hand over. Trowa gently slipped the ring on Quatre's empty ring finger, right beside the other rings he wore on his index and middle fingers. It was a perfect fit.

"I measured your finger while you were sleeping." Trowa added with a smile as the ring slipped on effortlessly.

"Oh Trowa, it's beautiful! Thank you." Quatre said wrapping his arms around Trowa's neck. "I love it."

"I love you. That ring is my promise Quatre. Until the day I replace it with a proper gold one and make it official. But I love you with all that I am, and I will always be by your side." Trowa said into golden hair as he felt Quatre began to shake with more happy tears.

Trowa smiled into the soft blonde, silken hair that tickled his chin. "You're such a romantic Quatre. You're so easy to please."

"Do you have a problem with that?" Quatre asked sitting up to wipe his eyes. His smile radiant as it lit up the night with its brilliance.

"Not in the slightest." Trowa answered smiling, leaning forward to claim a kiss from his beloved. Quatre gave it to him eagerly as he told Trowa how much he returned that love without words, but with the emotion he poured into his kiss.

The kiss lingered, and grew ever more urgent, as young love under the spell of romance and the full moon blossomed and grew. Trowa rolled Quatre onto his back in the soft moss and delivered more kisses to ears, throat, and shoulder as he tugged on Quatre's loose tunic to expose more flesh from the wide open neck of the garment.

But it wasn't enough, he wanted the infernal and offending piece of material gone as his hands slipped underneath to push it up, over and off of Quatre. Who lifted to accommodate Trowa's unspoken demand.

Lips returned with vigor as they rained more kisses down upon Quatre's chest, breath hissing through Quatre's teeth as Trowa clamped down and began to torment the dark pink skin of one and then the other of Quatre's nipples. "Oh Trowa!" Quatre moaned, writhing beneath Trowa in pleasure. His hands fisting in Trowa's tunic. "Take this off!" Quatre demanded and Trowa sat up eager to comply.

More wrestling with kisses as hands groped blindly in the dark. Breath coming ever more ragged as minds began to fog with heady desire. Soon all clothes were gone and lying scattered to the four winds around them as they made a bed of the soft moss.

And when Trowa's hand enclosed around Quatre's aching need the tone of the moan that slipped past Quatre's lips set Trowa on fire. Quatre's gift shot through Trowa like a dart and left a raging inferno in its wake. Trowa could feel Quatre's need and want mix with his own. A perfect harmony that blended and only added to Trowa's already overpowering needs.

"Oh GODS, Quatre!" Trowa growled diving down to bite and gnaw on Quatre's lips with passion.

"Yes! Oh Gods Trowa yes! MORE!" Quatre panted clawing and pulling at Trowa. He knew what Trowa wanted; he always knew what Trowa wanted. And Quatre wanted him to take it already.

"Just take me Trowa! PLEASE!" Quatre begged setting Trowa free with words since actions seemed to fail his infuriatingly patient beloved.

Trowa sat up on his ankles, disheveled and sweaty, looking down at Quatre as a wolf looked at his prey. "You will tell me to stop if I hurt you. Promise me."

"I promise." Quatre said running loving hands up Trowa's torso and over shoulders to pull him down for another kiss. "Now make love to me before I go mad." Quatre ordered as he released Trowa from his kiss.

Trowa drunk with passion sat up and spit into his hands. Gently working his saliva over his erection and Quatre. Quatre mewling as fingers gently touched him where no one had ever touched him.

It was too much and it wasn't enough. Quatre's power was everywhere, penetrating every pore of Trowa's body. It was sublime knowing everything that Quatre felt as if he had crawled into Quatre's mind. Trowa shifted and positioned himself and slowly and gently pushed.

Color, blinding color was everywhere. He felt Quatre's pain and then it was gone. Replaced by pleasure that was intense. It gave power to Trowa's own pleasure at feeling Quatre's love surround him both physically and mentally.

It was the best rush Trowa had ever experienced and he wanted more. He thrust again and again, clawing at that heightening sensation. His own pleasure feeding Quatre's as Quatre fed his own. It was the perfect union of two people, two hearts, two souls as they climbed to heights never dared before, never dream of before.

Names were sung like prayers and shouted like curses as they clawed at each other, desperate to reach what was promised and that was looming in what seemed like just out of reach.

"Oh gods! Oh Gods Trowa!" Quatre wailed with his head thrashing side to side. His voice echoing off the water as he reached the end, and shuddered violently under Trowa. A warm liquid spreading between their bodies as Quatre spent his pleasure for what seemed an eternity.

Trowa could barely breathe, as he struggled to maintain what had begun, an ever increasing pressure in both his groin and from Quatre who held him tight was his downfall. And as Quatre thrashed in ecstasy, so too did Trowa join him and he found his release as he heard Quatre's name fly from his throat and bounce off the trees as he came and shared his essence deep within his lover. He then lost all control of his expended body and collapsed into the moss half on top and half beside his beloved.

"Oh my... Trowa." Quatre gasped beside him, out of breath and exhausted. Trowa smiled.

"Like that?"

"Um-hummmm" Quatre purred rolling into Trowa's arms.

"Me too." Trowa said wrapping his arms around Quatre as they caught their breath and floated down from the cloud they were currently perched on.

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It was a tiring walk back to Iria's home; they chuckled and mused with each other that they should have picked a better spot to have their tryst. They were both bone-weary and tumbled gracelessly into Quatre's bed the moment they reached it. A deep sleep befalling them both the moment both heads hit the pillows.

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Ana and Dim made their way to Iria's breakfast table very late in the morning. Both feeling the after effects of a very late night, too much wine and playing like they were still young and twenty. Ana was lost in his tea while Dim decided to check on Quatre to see if how he was doing this morning. He was still recovering and had really gone overboard on his first day of activity since his ordeal.

Dim froze as he opened the door, and a smirk fell across his face. Sprawled in blankets and sheets were two sleeping figures, Quatre was on his side, his face illuminated by the morning sun, highlighting a smile that seemed frozen in place. Beside him, spread-eagle and flat on his stomach was Trowa. His face mashed into the pillows and snoring slightly.

Both men were naked as they day they were born. Dim chuckled and shut the door. He had to formulate a plan and fast. Letting Ana walk in on that scene would only breed weeks worth of teasing and harassing both Trowa and Quatre. Thankfully Ana was too sleepy and into his tea, if Quatre woke up before Ana decided to go up and check on their son's health, he'd escape Ana's evil sense of humor.

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Quatre stirred first and almost gave a start when he heard a soft snore beside him. He smiled as he rolled over to face Trowa. Gently moving a corner of Trowa's pillow out of Trowa's face. "You look so adorable like this." Quatre said moving Trowa's bangs away from his face where it was half pressed into the pillow. Trowa gave a small murmur of annoyance and batted at Quatre's fingers like he was an insect and buried his face in his pillow.

Quatre had to hold in his laugh so he didn't wake up Trowa. Not yet at least, there was more tormenting to be done to his sleeping lover. Quatre leaned in close and began to blow softly into Trowa's hair. Tickling his ears with his breath. Trowa swatted at him again. And once he'd settled, Quatre began his game again. This time kissing the ridge of Trowa's ear and his shoulder.

"Go away Kate!" Trowa barked into his pillow.

"Kate? Oh I don't think so." Quatre giggled and Trowa sat up fast as lightening, befuddled.

"Quatre!"

"Who else would it be? Did you forget about last night?" Quatre asked crawling across the sheets like a cat. Trowa's gaze darkened and became hooded with remembrance of a night of passion.

"I was dreaming about it actually. That's why I was so mad at Kate for waking me up." Trowa chuckled as Quatre crawled into his arms, stealing a long kiss in the process.

"Mmmmmmm. I could get used to this." Quatre sighed melting into Trowa's arms.

"Oh good. But how about this?" Trowa asked shifting positions to crawl on top of Quatre, pressing him into the sheets. Where he kissed first one cheek and then the other before propping himself up on his elbows to just look down upon the flushed blonde beneath him.

"Even better." Quatre said, his voice lazy and filled with happiness. Just as two stomachs growled breaking the mood and giving them both a case of the giggles.

"I'm HUNGRY!" Quatre whined and Trowa was already up pulling on his pants.

"So I am. Let's go eat." He said tossing Quatre's pants to him as they dressed to head to breakfast.

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Ana lifted and eyebrow as both Trowa and Quatre entered the room together. And was just about to make a rude comment as he sipped at his tea... when Quatre spoke first.

"You lied to me." He said looking at Ana.

"What?" Ana asked taken aback slightly, his cup still perched at his lips.

"I said, you lied to me. You told me our gifts were the highest of highs, better than sex. You lied. Sex is soooooo much better." Quatre said flopping gaily into his seat and plopping a ripe strawberry into his mouth with a smirk.

Ana at this point had begun taking a drink of his tea, and it shot out of his nose and mouth as he coughed and sputtered eyes wide as saucers.

Dim was howling, falling out of his chair to roll on the floor laughing. The stunned look on Ana's face was just priceless. Quatre had beat Ana at his own game.

Trowa was frozen in place, half in his chair. Not sure what to make of this side of Quatre. But then again, Ana had it coming to him and soon Trowa was also beside himself with silent chuckles.

"Oh bloody hell Sunshine! Don't do that, I think I got a new gray hair!" Ana said cleaning himself off and scowling at Dim on the floor. "And get up you ape. You could have TOLD ME and warned me you know." Ana grumbled and Dim crawled up back into his chair wiping his eyes.

"But this was so much more entertaining. Good on you sunshine. That was priceless." Dim said shoulder still shaking in mirth.

"Thank you!" Quatre quipped, beaming with smiles as he passed Trowa the pitcher of juice on the table.

"OH! What's this?" Ana asked espying the new ring on Quatre's finger and grabbing his son's hand.

"From Trowa. Isn't it beautiful?" Quatre asked as Ana inspected the ring on Quatre's finger.

"Stunning. Why do I have a feeling when we pull out of this village, my son will not be under my roof?" Ana asked looking at Trowa.

Trowa smiled "I've waited a long time to find Quatre. I'm not wasting time in making him mine for good. That's my promise to him, and I plan on replacing that ring with a gold one as soon as possible." Trowa said taking Quatre's other hand to hold.

"Not too soon I hope. It takes time to plan a wedding." Ana grinned, a drunken gleam in his eye.

"Papa, you have me worried. What nightmare of fashion are you concocting for me in your head?" Quatre asked smiling.

"Oh what little faith you have in your papa sunshine." Ana said feigning wounded pride.

"No but I do. Ana, Quatre's wedding, Quatre's decision." Dim said eyeing Ana warily.

"I will only make suggestions." Ana said smiling over the rim of his cup.

"Riiiiiight. I'll believe THAT when I see it." Dim muttered going to butter his toast, knowing once Ana got started, there was no stopping the vain idiot.

He looked up in time to see Trowa lean over and steal a kiss. "Happy Quatre?" He asked and Quatre smiled.

“Over the moon.” Quatre answered brightly and let his emotions wash over everyone seated at the table. Leaving no doubt in anyone’s mind the sincerity of his words.

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Seven Years later...

The troupe had made camp for the night along a deserted stretch of road that wound it’s way through tall, ancient trees. It was beautiful, but Trowa noticed his spouse seemed distracted as the light of their fire glinted on the silver and gold hoops in his ears and off his eyes that seemed to stare out into the trees, trying to see something just beyond the light of the fire.

“Quatre? Are you all right love?” Trowa asked and Quatre stood.

“No. Something is wrong. My skin is crawling. No not crawling, tingling.” Quatre said still looking out into he trees. “I need to go there. I don’t know why, but I do.” Quatre said pointing into the dense line of trees.

“So let’s go.” Trowa said grabbing a torch as they walked where Quatre’s senses told him to go.

The sound of a baby crying in the night made both men break out into a run to reach the sound.

There in a small hut in the clearing a woman lay in her tattered bed. Her life expired in giving birth to the baby still bloodied and wailing where it lay in the sheets between her legs. “Oh gods.” Quatre sobbed gently taking the babe in his arms, and laying it against his chest. It instantly stopped crying.

“There, there now. Papa is here.” Quatre whispered to the infant running his hands over the thick mop of soft newborn hair on top of the babe’s head. “You’re safe now. I’m here.” Quatre muttered as Trowa stood in shock.

Papa?

Quatre looked up and smiled at Trowa. “He was calling to me. It was him I could feel. He’s like me. I showed you how to feel Trowa. Feel him with your senses.” Quatre said and Trowa closed his eyes and laid a hand to the baby’s head. He could feel a power similar to what he always felt from Quatre.

“The son will always call the father, and the father will always come.” Quatre cooed at the baby and Trowa smiled and pulled his hand back.

“Fathers” Trowa said taking the baby to examine lightly. Cutting the cord and cleaning him off tenderly. Wrapping him in a warm blanket before handing him back to Quatre. “Take him back and keep him warm Quatre. He’s hungry, see if Hilde can wet nurse him. She’s just about to wean David from her breast, I’m sure she won’t mind another babe for a while.” Trowa said and Quatre nodded. Taking the baby out and back to camp. Knowing without asking that Trowa was now seeing to the mother, and burying her properly.

By the time Trowa returned to camp, Hilde had just finished feeding the newborn. “He’s beautiful. I’ll be back in a few hours to feed him again. It’s my pleasure to help you with your son.” Hilde said kissing Trowa’s cheek as she went back to her own family.

Trowa walked into his wagon to see Quatre lying on their bed, the babe beside him sleeping soundly. Quatre’s running fingers through the soft auburn brown hair. He was glowing as he smiled at the baby. Trowa crawled in beside them, the baby in-between them. “It’s amazing Trowa, look at him. You didn’t see his eyes. They are the same color as mine.” Quatre began still

combing the baby's hair. "And his hair is the same color as yours." He added looking up to meet Trowa's smile.

"Not of our flesh, but of our hearts." Trowa said leaning over to kiss the crown of hair atop the infant's head. "What shall we name him?" Trowa asked looking up at Quatre who had tears in his eyes.

"Viktor?"

"Ugh Viktor? No, Stefan."

"André then."

Came Dim and Ana's playful, bickering voices at the door as Quatre and Trowa turned to smile at them. "Mind if we name our own son?" Trowa asked as the two men entered the wagon.

"Only offering suggestions." Ana said grinning leaning over to look at the babe.

"I think he looks like a Tobias to me." Quatre said picking up the baby to cradle as he sat up. The baby never stirred and only nestled into Quatre's arms.

Trowa was amazed at how the babe and Quatre seemed to fit so well together. It was truly as if Quatre was it's father and the baby knew it was safe in his arms. A slow smile spread across Trowa's face as he realized he now had a complete family, he felt whole. "I think Tobias is good." Trowa said leaning over to first kiss Quatre, then the baby he held. "Welcome home Tobias." Trowa whispered into the babe's ear.

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4 years later...

"Toby I mean it, get down from there right now!" Trowa hollered at his son who was once again on top of the wagon. How he kept managing to get up there in the first place Trowa would never know.

"But papa..." Tobias whined peeping over the edge.

"You heard him Toby. Get down now." Quatre said walking up behind Trowa and crossing his arms over his chest.

The tot pouted but did as told. Sliding down and shimmying into the window. Trowa chuckled when the boy was out of sight. "So that's how he does it. Remind me to fix the latch on the window." Trowa said as the toddler, head hung low, walked out the door.

"Don't pout, you know you're not supposed to go up there." Trowa scolded as Tobias stopped in front of his father's. Four rings catching the late afternoon sun and glinting in the light where they had been sewn into his vest. They were still too large for his fingers after all.

"I know." Toby said digging his toe in the dirt. "But it's pretty up there." He said and Quatre sighed.

"But it's dangerous. No go wash your hands, grandpapa Dim's birthday is today, and we're going to go have dinner with him and grandpapa Ana." Quatre said pushing his son in the right direction.

Scolding forgotten in favor of a visit to his grandfather's, Toby scampered off to wash his hands.

Quatre shook his head and turned and gasped. "Oh Trowa, just LOOK at the sunset." Quatre sighed, as the sky on the horizon was aglow in hues of purple, orange, magenta, and violet blue as the sun began to sink in the sky.

"The sun never sets." Trowa said slipping his arms around Quatre's waist.

"Come again?" Quatre asked as Trowa spooned up behind him and planted a kiss on Quatre's shoulder.

"I said, the sun never sets. The sun is always shining for me as long as I have the two of you." Trowa said and as predicted Quatre's knees faltered. He was still such a romantic; it was so easy to turn Quatre into moldable putty.

"You big softy." Quatre said turning and wrapping his arms around his husband's neck.

"Yes, I am. Like that bothers you?"

"Not in the slightest." Quatre said as Trowa leaned forward and melted Quatre's bones further with his kiss. Trowa's kisses always seemed to take his breath away and they only seemed to grow more potent over time.

The sun indeed never set on a love that was brighter than sun. And would never set so long as they had each other.

THE END

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- (1) Folk instruments of the violin type include the Norwegian Hardanger fiddle, a violin with sympathetic resonating strings, and the French *vielle a roue*, or the Hungarian *hurdy-gurdy*, a mechanically bowed violin with keys for stopping, or pressing down, the strings. The hurdy-gurdy is a musical instrument equipped with a rosined wheel which when turned plays the strings. A set of keys controls the pitch. Also known as a barrel organ. Ya know, the guys on the street corner with the capuchin monkeys that tip their hats at you! That box with the crank on the side is a hurdy-gurdy.
- (2) Cimbalom - The cimbalom is a string instrument from Hungary that is a dulcimer, a family of instruments that uses beaters to strike strings which stretch along the entire body of an instrument. There are two types of Hungarian cimbalom: a small portable version (which is what Quatre was given in this story) and a larger concert version that is set in a large sound box supported by legs. Joseph Schunda invented this larger version in the 1870s. The cimbalom is commonly used in Hungarian Gypsy orchestras.
- (3) Hungarian Folk Songs were used in my mind as the TYPE of music the Free Peoples played. They are also the basis in culture for the "Gypsies" in this fic - Hungary has a rich folk tradition that reflects wide influences ranging from the Turks of the Ottoman Empire to the wandering Gypsies. Among the common folk instruments of Hungary are the violin, the cimbalom, a hammered dulcimer, the hurdy-gurdy, and the duda, a type of bagpipes. The verbunkos and the csardas are two especially popular fast dances