Two Turtle Doves

by Wolfsheart

Summary

Christmas in Manhattan. Charles is the best big brother ever, and he wants to make sure Raven has a better childhood than she started out with, so he takes her to the biggest fairyland he can think of.

Notes

They never say in the movies how Raven wound up raised with Charles. We could even say raised by Charles because it’s obvious his mother didn’t even raise him but rather left him to his own devices, more than likely with the servants as his actual parental guides. I’m going with the assumption that Charles planted the idea in his mother and father’s minds (and likely Cain’s, too) that Raven had always been his sister, born and raised in the family all along. I also have a feeling that Charles and Raven were little hellions in their own way, especially when they wanted things as children that they needed a parent for – Raven could easily look like Mother or Father, and Charles would plant the suggestion that she was in people’s minds.

Also, this is for Dwaroxxx, who requested some happy Charles/Raven fics.
Raven hadn’t understood why Charles was so excited about the trip into the city. She wanted to stay home and make snow angels – with actual wings that she could make herself because she could appear angelic if she wanted. She wanted to throw snowballs at Cain because he was such a bully sometimes, especially to Charles. She wanted cocoa by the big fire in the living room while she and Charles curled up to watch the twinkling tree lights while he read stories to her.

But nooooooo. Mother wanted to go into Manhattan to shop on Fifth Avenue, and she’d promised Charles – at his ‘gentle suggestion’ – to take them to some...store that made him giggle like a silly goose when she’d agreed. Raven had never even heard of this store with its weird name, and Charles didn’t tell her anything about it when she’d asked before he kissed her forehead goodnight.

“You’ll see. It’s magical,” he promised her then turned out her lamp and made sure her nightlight was plugged in before he left her room for his own.

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“You children go on ahead. Charles, you know the way. Hold Raven’s hand and don’t let her get lost,” Mother said as she tucked her compact once more into her pocketbook. She didn’t look at the two children climbing out of the Rolls Royce behind her. She didn’t check to make sure they were bundled in their coats and scarves and gloves.

Charles had done all of that before they left the house, personally bundling Raven’s small body into her warm clothes and coat and gloves and swathed her neck with the scarf. The last thing he’d done was secure a cute little hat onto her head, and that was well after he’d braided her hair for her.

“I’ll watch her, Mother. Don’t worry,” Charles replied and took firm hold of his sister’s hand.

Mother wasn’t paying attention, however. Already, her eyes sparkled like the jewels she’d purchase with some excuse of needing them in case her husband questioned her about them. Along with the clothes and shoes. She wasn’t worried about her children at all.

Raven watched as the department store swallowed Mother whole, and she vowed to herself that she wouldn’t be a mother like that some day when she had her own children to raise.

However, she didn’t have time to worry about that because Charles tugged her up the street, threading them through the groups of adults as if he was used to being on his own all the time. Her eyes looked up and up and up at all the tall buildings, but then she bumped into a lady in her fur coat who huffed over two children rushing past.

“Charles, why do we have to see this store? What’s so important about it?” she demanded again, already tired and seeing nothing of interest at all. There was dirty snow piled in the street, and the Christmas wreaths and bows on the lamp posts were pretty, but the rest was concrete and fussy adults.

“Just wait. We’re almost there,” Charles promised and hurried just a little more until he’d picked up that Raven’s legs were sore and she was out of breath.

He stopped and pulled Raven close to his side, his hand tightening on hers as his body buzzed with excitement.

“Here we are!” he exclaimed, and they stood there and stared all the way up at the sign.

Raven tilted her head.
“What’s FAO Schwartz?” she questioned and looked to see the mischievous smile spread across her brother’s face.

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Raven licked at the lollypop that Charles had bought for her, her mind lost in the cherry-sweetness, not even thinking about the sugar rush she’d have by the time Mother came for them. There would be more sweets because Charles loved candy, and he seemed to feel that Raven hadn’t had nearly her share of it in her young life.

She’d never believed that a fairyland could exist right here in New York, but it did. Her eyes had widened, and if it hadn’t been for Charles’ soothing voice in her head, she’d have lost control of her shifting ability and been one wide-eyed little blue girl right in the middle of all of these normal children. They’d run through the store and played with trains and on the big one that kids could ride. They’d oohed and aahed over the winter land of Christmas trees and sparkling lights and fake snow that was almost as good as the real thing at home.

At last, they’d separated – just for a moment! – so that Charles could look at the boy toys like fighter planes and science experiments while Raven was free to fill up her wishlist with all the dollhouses and play clothes a little girl could want, especially for tea parties.

She looked around at the shelves of stuffed bears and dollies, and when she bit down on her sigh, she also bit down on the candy. Frustration bittered the sugar.

“What’s the matter?” Charles asked as he stepped up beside her. He’d been three aisles away, trying to decide which microscope he wanted to ask for with Christmas just a couple of weeks away.

“You always know when I’m upset,” Raven muttered and rolled her eyes before she looked at Charles. She wanted to deny that anything was wrong, but he’d see right through her.

“None of the dolls look like me.”

Charles fixed his eyes on the rows of dolls in boxes. They had dolls of every hair and eye color. They even had little black dolls for the little black girls who would love them. Then he pointed to one with long blonde hair and blue eyes with a smart outfit, a kitten, and a purse.

“There’s one there,” he announced, as if Raven missed it.

Raven turned to look at Charles, and as she did so, she returned to herself, her real self – blue skin, red hair, yellow eyes. It lasted exactly two heartbeats, long enough for Charles to really see her.

“No. None of them look like me. None of them will ever look like me.”

She changed back to the blonde-haired, blue-eyed doll on the shelf, only she didn’t have the clutch or the kitten. All her kittens were at home cuddled at the fire where she wanted to be again.

Charles sighed.

“I see.”

He squeezed Raven’s hand. Then his smile brightened again.

“You’re unique, Raven, and no one can ever duplicate you into a silly doll. You’re not a doll, after
all. You’re a person,” Charles told her, trying to be the best big brother he could be to a sister who had to play pretend every day.

Raven rolled her eyes.

“Sure. I’m not a doll. I’m special,” she droned the words she heard so often from him.

“Let’s go look at the marbles,” she suggested, wanting to find some new ones. She thought she had a few quarters in her coat pocket.

Charles nodded. He would buy her all the marbles she wanted, as long as it made her smile. He leaned close and whispered in her ear.

“And then we can pretend that you’re Mother and buy some chocolate.”

*

Christmas morning was the usual affair. Cain was happy. He’d been given his first car, and he rushed out to drive it around the neighborhood before any of the other presents were opened.

Charles had his microscope and a new set of books on scientific theories.

Mother preened over her new satin robe and the diamond ring fixed to her right hand.

Father had new ties and shirts, a new set of golf clubs, and best of all, he had the peace and quiet of a satisfied family, which meant he could retreat to his study until it was time to eat.

Raven stared down at the blonde-haired, blue-eyed doll with the kitten and purse, trying to suss out the fairness of the world. She was loved and protected and no one bullied her here. Charles adored her and made sure Mother and Father believed she was theirs so that she didn’t have to run away and hide anymore.

The world just loved normal girls with normal colored hair and eyes, and she would have to accept that.

She turned over the doll box with the intention of opening it to pull her out. In trying to find the way to open it, she found a piece of paper affixed to the bottom with tape.

*Look under your bed.*

The note was in Charles’ fastidious writing – he was learning cursive already, and he tried to teach Raven, too, so she could have prettier handwriting than all the other girls.

She left the blonde doll on the living room floor and hurried upstairs.

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Raven tugged the box out from underneath the bed.

*Keep this one secret from Mother and Father. Merry Christmas. Love Charles.*

It was wrapped in the way a boy expert in making paper airplanes would wrap something. She
pulled the paper away, careful not to make too much of a tearing sound.

“Ohhhhh!” she gasped.

In all ways, the doll was identical to the one downstairs, down to the smart dress, little handbag, and kitten.

All ways, that is, save the red hair, blue skin, and yellow eyes that stared back at Raven.

The doll shared a secret smile with her new owner.

Raven had the best brother in the whole world.

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