Cups of Coffee

by TigerMoon

Summary

A collection of drabbles and flash fics done on Tumblr, all about my favorite old men and their fabulous gay adventures.

Latest Chapter- 16: Sometimes, it's easier for Qrow to let the flowers do the talking.

Notes

Most of these came about due to challenges or requests sent to me via my tumblr; I'll occasionally take requests, though it depends on my mood and how good the prompt is.
“Qrow.”

The creature in question fluffed his feathers and gave a questioning caw from his comfortable perch atop Headmaster Ozpin’s shoulder.

“In a bit, I promise.”

Another caw, and the crow nibbled the man’s earlobe.

Ozpin sighed and flipped through his scroll. “Qrow, please. I have to finish this.”

A flurry of wingbeats, and the crow plucked the scroll from his hands. “No,” Qrow scolded as soon as he turned back. “You have to get some sleep. This can wait.”

“It can’t.” Ozpin glanced up at him, chocolate eyes smudged underneath with weariness like kohl. “There’s just… there’s never enough time.”

Qrow sighed, snapping the scroll closed. “Not even for me?” he asked, crouching down beside his chair.

A pale hand stole out and wrapped itself in the other’ grey-streaked locks. “My dusty old Qrow,” Ozpin murmured, stroking his cheek. “I’ll always have time for you.”
Never Enough Time

Chapter Summary

Prompt: Time Travel, cloqwork

“What can I do?” Qrow begs and though the bottle of bourbon he’s slugged down has slurred his words it can do nothing to take away the horror that thrums through his veins, the pain that stabs his heart and makes the backs of his eyes burn (dead Ozpin’s dead oh gods he can’t be dead I failed I failed him); “When I go back- the attack is in two hours-”

His doppelganger stares at him, unfathomably older in Mistral’s foggy moonlight; he grabs Qrow by the wrist and forces him to look him in they eye. “You’ll save him,” he growls, and there is something manic beneath the grief, self-loathing and bitterness and desperation; “You can’t save Vale but you can save him.”
Sunsets in the city of Mistral were breathtaking. From its perch high upon the cliffside, one could see far out upon the namesake country, the wilds and forests that made up the main province. Beyond there lay the rise and fall of mountains, snow-capped at their tallest peaks, and unseen beyond that-

Oscar leaned against the railing of the hostel room’s balcony. Beyond the mountains lay the farm. The farm and his auntie and the loft above the barn he’d made all his own, with the rug he’d bartered for and the homemade quilt his aunt had made him for Yule one year and his books and-

“Do you ever get homesick, Oz?”

A flash of something ran through Oscar’s mind- a tall, tall tower, the steady ticking of a clock, the crackle of flames- gone, gone, gone. All the time, Ozpin said softly.

Oscar ran his thumb over the railing, letting his thumbnail catch on the dents in the wood. “It’s gone now, though, isn’t it? Your home?”

An ache tugged at his chest. Beacon is-

“Beacon’s gone. For now.” Heavy footsteps came up behind him; Qrow paused before folding himself down onto the balcony, letting a long leg dangle off the edge. “The Grimm are too heavy for anyone to push aside, and, well — Atlas sure as hell ain’t gonna clean up the mess they helped cause.”

Resignation from Ozpin; Oscar glanced at Qrow before biting on his lower lip. “Is that what’s going to happen here?” he asked.

“That’s what we’re trying to prevent.” Qrow took a sip from his flask.

A few moments passed before, in a much smaller voice: “… is that what’s gonna happen to the farm?”

Qrow sat up straight beside him, eyes narrowed. In his mind, he could feel warmth, Ozpin’s hard-fought steadfastness like a blanket around him. “I – I mean. You said this – this Salem. She knew what Ozpin was, right? She – they – she burned down an entire huntsmans academy just to kill him, what’s going to stop her from burning my auntie to get to me? Or Mistral?”

“Oscar,” Qrow began.

“I don’t-” He choked and rubbed his burning eyes. “I don’t want people to die ‘cause of me.”

Then we have to protect them, came Ozpin’s reply, heavy with the weight of years. Neither you nor I had a choice in this matter, and we can grieve what what has happened or what might have been, but we cannot let that grief destroy us.
Oscar, his head tilted as he listened, clenched his fists. “But-!”

“But nothing,” Qrow said, his brow furrowed in concern. “I dunno what Oz is telling you, but I’m willing to bet it’s wise and not very comforting. And he’s probably right.”

“I’m scared,” he said – to whom he didn’t know. Before he could get the words out of his mouth, there were warm arms about his shoulders (Ozpin) and a hand on his back (Qrow) and Oscar wanted to cry all over again because he was scared and homesick and being a child… and it was okay to be that way.

Because Oscar was scared and homesick… and so were they.
Qrow was in the middle of story involving himself, six Grimm, and a helpless damsel in distress when the elevator lurched to the side with a sickening squeal, throwing him off balance and smashing him and his helpless audience against the wall.

The lights went out; the motors made a terrible grinding noise before they, too, went silent.

“This,” complained Ozpin, his voice thin and nasal in the darkness, “is not how I’d hoped to spend my day off. Also, I think you broke my nose.”

“Oh, please. You have more Aura in your nose than most people have in their entire bodies, Oz.” The emergency lights flickered, then turned on, casting a low green glow over the cramped room. Ozpin was flat on his back on the floor, pinned under Qrow. A sizeable dent in the fabric wall covering showed exactly where he’d been smashed face-first into it; his glasses hung askew on his face, one lens cracked. His nose wasn’t bleeding, but from the way his eyes were scrunched, he was definitely feeling the effects. Qrow grinned when Ozpin glared up at him. “You poor thing. Want me to kiss it better?”

Amber eyes flickered over to the camera in the corner, now dead, then back at the man above him. “Well,” he said, with as much dignity as he could muster, “it would be the very least you could do, seeing as you caused this.”

Qrow chuckled and pecked a kiss to the tip of his nose. “That didn’t help one bit,” Ozpin complained.

“Oh? Let me try again.” Two more quick pecks, then a third. He grinned, sly and mocking. “How’s that?”

Ozpin rolled his eyes. “My nose still hurts. And my head. You’re really quite terrible at th-”

Laughing, Qrow bent and peppered Ozpin’s face with kisses- tiny nips to his jaw, feather-light presses to his eyelids, nuzzles against his cheeks and throat before a slow press of lips against lips. The man beneath him sighed and raked his hands up his powerful arms, sucked at his bottom lip.

“Now?” Qrow asked when they parted for air.

Ozpin’s voice was full and throaty. “Who said you could stop?” he breathed, curling his fingers in the hair at the nape of his neck.

“I think stopping for a moment would be a good idea.”

Both men froze as the distinctly feminine voice echoed in the broken elevator. “Oh, hey, Glynda,” Qrow said after a second’s pause. “So. We put on a good enough show for you?”
Beneath him, Ozpin covered his face with his hands and groaned.

“I only looked long enough to make sure you were both alive.” Her voice was horribly amused. “I’m not into voyeurism, Qrow.”

“Funny, I could have sworn you were into something kinky—”

“Anyway—” They could practically hear her rolling her eyes at that. “We’ll have a repair crew there to get you out in, say, ten minutes? Do be sure to wrap up your… private discussions… before then. I wouldn’t want you two to get caught sharing sensitive information.” A click, and she was gone.

Qrow looked down at Ozpin. “Did she just…?”

Ozpin was ahead of him, reaching back up to pull him down again. “Nine minutes, thirty-seven seconds now, Qrow,” he murmured, his amber eyes alight in the dim lighting. “Think that’s enough time?”

A wicked smile split his lips. “Yeah,” he said. “Yeah, I think that’s enough.”
Ozpin didn’t see the purpose in capes.

They were all the rage with young Huntsmen- and even Huntresses- silly lengths of fabric more likely to get caught in doors or shredded by shrubbery than to provide any real, practical protection. In his day, long field coats had been de rigeur; practical, rugged, made for inclement weather, and at least a decent trenchcoat had damned pockets in it. What the hell use was a cape?

(Granted, there were uses for capes, particularly Qrow’s, but none of those uses were ones the headmaster would ever admit to in polite company.)

Qrow had left his cape behind this morning, actually. It had ripped nearly in half during his last mission and Ozpin was still in the process of mending it. He shook the fabric out, testing the strength of his stitches. The fabric didn’t look like much in his hands, but damn if it didn’t complete Qrow’s look. Ozpin had to admit, he often felt rather plain standing beside the old bird-the preening crow and the stodgy old headmaster.

“I wonder,” he murmured to himself. It was a silly notion, but- but he was alone, and no one could see, so what could it hurt? There was a full-length mirror in the bedroom; he stood before it, fidgeting, ears and cheeks scarlet with embarrassment before shrugging his jacket off and tossing the fabric around him. The cape fluttered about his shoulders, hanging loosely off his vest-

“Hey, not bad~”

Ozpin started, snatching the cape off and whirling around as Qrow started laughing. “I was- just-” He floundered, his face as red as the cape. “Making sure I mended it properly! That’s all!”

“Suuure, Oz.” Qrow pointedly eyed him up and down as he sauntered over. “Gotta say, I kinda liked that. It’s a little too short for you, but that just means it doesn’t cover up your best assets.”

Ozpin groaned and covered his face with the cape. “You’re never going to let me live this down, are you?”

“What, the great and powerful headmaster of Beacon playing dressup with his boyfriend’s clothes?” Qrow pulled the cape away and kissed him on the nose. “Nope.”
prompt: Kisses because everything hurts right now, even being loved by you, but you’re the only thing that makes it better

She stood on an open field, that precious white rose blooming crimson in the snow and the dust and the wind, a little scar of white that stained red red red over his fingers, unseeing, unfeeling, and the red wouldn’t go back in, silver eyes fading, she touched his cheek and smiled, goddamn her, she smiled-

“Qrow.” A hand on his shoulder, warm and comforting. “Qrow, you’ve had enough.”

“Fuck you.” How Ozpin had found him out here, in the woods off the coast of northern Vale, Qrow didn’t know. Qrow didn’t care. All he cared about was the white tombstone out on the cliff before him, the words in marble- “’Thus Kindly I Scatter’. Heh.” He drained the bottle of vodka and tossed it to the ground with the rest. The alcohol burned going down; he needed it, needed the burn to drown out the tightness in his chest, the burning in his eyes. “Summer- She wasn’t ready for this kind of mission! She didn’t deserve this!”

Ozpin knelt beside him. “I know,” he said quietly.

“You know? You know? You fucked up, Oz! You sent her out to die!” And it hurt, it hurt so much to scream at the man he loved, but there was no one else to turn against in his drunken grief. No one else but Ozpin, who took it all with quiet acceptance, his warm brown eyes soft and understanding - and that hurt too, that he wouldn’t get mad, or shout, or anything. “Why- you fucking-”

“I know, Qrow,” he said again, and Qrow swung out and struck him a terrific blow to the jaw, sending him sprawling backwards.

Qrow pounced, straddling him, all rage and fury. “Quit- fucking- saying that!” he screamed in Ozpin’s face. Tears streamed down Qrow’s cheeks now; he ignored them, balling his fists up in the other’s shirt and shaking him. “You sent her to die like a fucking pawn and I-” He choked as Ozpin put his hands on his shoulders. “I- I couldn’t save her- I couldn’t-”

“I know,” Ozpin whispered. “Gods, I know.”

Qrow sobbed once, raw and desperate, and pressed himself forward to a rough kiss. He hated this, he hated everything right now- Ozpin, Summer, fate, himself- but Ozpin’s arms wrapped tight around him, running soothing hands up and down his back, murmuring comfort against the rough and biting kisses. “I’m sorry,” Qrow sobbed. “I’m sorry-”

Ozpin held him tighter, kissed the corner of his lips. “I know, love,” he murmured. “I am too.”
Chapter Summary

Prompt: 'we're being silly for once' kisses

Most people were aware that Ozpin was fueled by black coffee (and insomnia, and pig-headed stubbornness). What most people didn’t know was that when those failed him, when he was practically giddy in his exhaustion and on the edge of delirium, he had a secret weapon.

Hot chocolate.

Pure sugar, with cocoa— because gods know he never ate properly— was the fuel that pressed him through the late nights. Until it failed. (Or until someone came and put an end to his nonsense.)

Right now, though, he was in the properly silly sugar-fueled rush that came from downing six tall hot chocolates in a row.

“Y’know,” Qrow managed with a straight face, leaning against his desk, “you’ve got a hell of a mustache going there.”

Ozpin stopped looking over requisition notes and glanced up at him. “A what?” he asked, head tilted in utter confusion. He looked almost birdlike, and Qrow burst into laughter.

“In fact,” Qrow chuckled, “I haven’t seen one that fancy since the last time Ruby drank chocolate milk.”

It took a second for that to process in Ozpin’s exhausted brain. His cheeks flushed scarlet up to the tips of his ears. “Oh.”

Qrow leaned over the desk, a grin on his face. “So… want me to shave you?”

Ozpin blinked, then burst out laughing. “You’re ridiculous,” he chuckled, leaning forward. “But how can I say no to being pampered like that?”

“Better be still, then, or I’ll nick ya.” Laughing, they came together, Qrow’s tongue swiping across Ozpin’s upper lip as Ozpin ran his hands across his powerful arms. A flick of tongue against tongue, a low growl, Ozpin nibbling Qrow’s lower lip before meeting in a lazy chocolate-fueled kiss.

“So,” Qrow mumbled against Ozpin’s lips, “how ‘bout a facial?”

Ozpin shoved him off, laughing. “Qrow.No.”

“Qrow yes.” He grinned and licked his lips. “Mistrali massage? Full-body.”

“Qrow…”

The corvid leaned forward and stole another kiss, eyes wicked and merry. “It even comes with a happy ending~”
Ozpin chuckled and shook his head. Qrow rose to meet him, Ozpin draping his arms around his waist and pulling him close. “I already have that,” he whispered, and kissed him again.
Of Magic, Animagi, and Frog Slime

Chapter Summary

Hogwarts AU!

“Will you be still, Branwen? I’m trying to concentrate.”

The boy in question peeked his head up above the edge of the cauldron, laughing as his companion irritably flicked frog slime at him. “Nah,” Qrow said cheekily. “’s more fun riling you up. Why’re you so worried, anyway? It worked on Raven, didn’t it?”

Ozpin heaved a put-upon sigh, giving his boyfriend a flat look. “Barely,” he drawled. “And while I don’t care if she sprouts six legs and a two-tonne tail, I would much rather leave your tail just as it is, thank you.”

“I could make so many comments, Oz-”

“Oh, shut up.”

Qrow laughed again, the sound echoing in the empty room. They made quite the oddball pair, even for a school as eccentric as Hogwarts. Qrow was perhaps the most notorious student in the school—Gryffindor, naturally, with a track record of misbehavior that put even the legendary Weasleys to shame. He wore his Muggleborn status as a symbol of pride and it was entirely his fault that Muggle clothing was experiencing a fashion trend among the students.

And then there was Ozpin, the quiet Slytherin prefect. Who and what he was, was something of a point of contention, as he was much too young to have hair so silver, and his sheer magical ability was on an absurd level. He didn’t even use a proper wand to do magic, but a walking cane—when he deigned to use anything at all. It was ridiculous and several of his teachers resented having a pupil so much more skilled than they were. So did the students, when they weren’t deciding Ozpin wasn’t some kind of monster hybrid or reincarnation of the Dark Lord.

(Qrow knew the truth. Qrow knew the truth and stayed, and Ozpin loved him all the more fiercely for it.)
Ozpin wiped the last of the slime onto a nearby cloth and pulled out the most essential part of the spell—three glossy black crow feathers. “You do know we’ll be expelled if we’re caught? A prank is one thing, but unregistered animagi are still—”

“Yes. Oz, quit worrying.” He took hold of the other’s bony wrist and squeezed. “I got this. You’ve got this.” Qrow leaned forward over the cauldron and kissed him on the corner of the lips, awkward but eager. “I wouldn’t trust anyone else.”

“...all right.” Ozpin smiled, phoenix fire dancing behind his eyes. “Then let’s do this.”
When Summer Rose puts a tiny newborn Ruby into his arms, Ozpin briefly—very briefly—panics.

It’s not because he doesn’t know what to do with her. It’s because he does.

(\textit{hold her tight support her head that fragile life will soon be gone, they all grow and die and he remains—})

But either he’s very good at hiding it or Summer’s too tired to notice, because she gives an exhausted kind of laugh as Yang crawls up into her lap. “You’re a natural,” she teases gently. “Have you done this before?”

“More times than I can count,” he says, and something in his tone of voice must have given him away because her weary smiles begins to fade.

“I didn’t mean to bring up bad memories—”

“But you didn’t.” Ruby’s tiny fist grabs onto his finger and Ozpin softens, the faintest hint of a smile gracing his lips. “Those are such wonderful memories, Summer. Not mine, but—mine. Not every life had children but those that did were blessed.”

(\textit{He doesn’t think about those first four. About Ozma, and Salem, and those first four little girls, a torn toy burning in ashes. He doesn’t.})

“… I used to sing to them,” he adds, his voice oddly tight. “At night. It was the one time when I could stop, put the rest of the world aside, and just focus on my children.” He lets out a low breath, shuddering. “I only wish I had stopped to do so more often.”

Summer puts a hand atop his wrist, gently squeezing, and he doesn’t look at her, those huge silver eyes that look so much like the children he’d once had. At Yang, peeking out curiously at him from behind her cloak. At Ruby and her unfocused blue-grey eyes, innocent.

“The girls love lullabies,” Summer says gently.

(\textit{His children are gone. But these ones remain, and that is enough to let him hope.})

Ozpin closes his eyes, draws in a deep breath, and quietly begins to sing.
Prompt by maripr on tumblr: "Ok but imagine if by the end of the volume, RWBY and co finally understand how much Oz has sacrificed and they vow to stay by his side. And he's never heard anyone say that after revealing his biggest secrets to them, everyone has abandoned him, but not now. Sho he just drops to his knees and weeps."

“We’re not leaving.”

He used to tell them, centuries and centuries ago. The ones he that carried his heart and his hope—friends, lovers—he would slit his wrists with his words and let his sins bleed from his flesh, all so they could understand. Who he was. What he was. What he could and could never be.

He told them everything, and they crucified him on their anger.

(But they were justified, he told himself with every life anew, brought down at the hands of someone he loved, terrified and betrayed. He deserved this. He deserved this, if this was what the truth brought him, death and sorrow.)

With each new betrayal, his heart scarred closed just a bit more.

Until he just… stopped.

Betrayal and honesty set back his mission from the Gods. that was all. It had nothing to do with his aching heart, his unbearable loneliness, the rejection of his being at every turn.

And if he had to silence the truth to gain this small sense of comfort—he was still human. Still human, no matter what the world said.

(Please, Gods, he’d pray—let me still be human.)

And now, this. Truth spoken again after centuries of silence. Betrayal. And he is so, so very heartsick and tired, his heart and his hope shattered about him.

And yet—

“We’re not leaving you, Professor Ozpin.”

There’s Ruby, crouched before him, silver eyes faintly glowing. There’s his students, gathered together, cautious smiles on their faces—smiling at him, why are they smiling at him, why? There’s warmth within his soul, Oscar softly encouraging. There’s weight beside him; Qrow, he knows with every spark of his soul, and he has to look up then, when that calloused hand smooths over his back, soothing.

They’re here. They’re—here, with him. They know what he is, they know the truth and they’re—

His legs give out from under him; his vision blurs and a sob wrenches its way out of his chest, another, another, his scarred heart ripped open and unable to hold so much emotion after so many
centuries.

Ozpin lets himself sink into hands about him, the murmured words, and just—*feels*. Just for that moment.

Because they’re here.
It’s like breaking through ice, when Oscar closes his eyes; it’s pain, cold and sharp and it squeezes his lungs shut until he’s struggling for just one breath, suffocating.

Memory is what Oscar has always used to comfort himself—a panacea against the world, when days are long and nights are longer—but there is no comfort to be found here. Not here, in the whirlwind storm that is Ozpin’s self-hatred, haunted memories played on endless loop.

There’s screams in the wind, children’s sobs, voices Oscar knows because they are him and he is them, stop and no and please Gods please, not my children, not my girls.

Believe me.

Help me.

Please don’t go.

Those are the loudest, slurred together in a blur of self-loathing and desperation, pleasedon’tgoplease, buried under echoed voices from the past, anger and vitriol. Betrayal and bitterness, repeated through centuries, memories thick like tar and clinging at him, draining hope. Those are where the cracks are, deep within, the center of the storm—where the pain and the fear run deepest and the memories keep Ozpin trapped, drowning.

Oscar drags in a deep breath and dives in.
A Bitter Pill

Chapter Summary

In Argus, Ruby and Ozpin have a much-needed talk.

It doesn't go at all how Ruby expects it to.

Chapter Notes

(Tumblr prompt by @valasania-the-pale: Ruby decides to sit Oscar down and ask to talk to Ozpin - not taking no for an answer from either of them. I'd love to see a pretty frank conversation between these two - they've both got some legitimate grievances to talk out (Ruby asking the question, Oz not trusting them, either to say 'this is highly personal, leave it' or about the other stuff). Maybe she asks him if he has advice for dealing with Qrow toward the end)

I didn't see this going at all how my prompter saw it. Sorry!

The problem with Ruby was that she’s persistent as all hell.

Oscar tried explaining that he couldn’t force Ozpin to show up for them - that he had tried, several times, to no avail - but she’d simply smiled, hands on her hips, and grinned at him.

It wasn’t entirely a nice grin.

“That’s because I haven’t tried.”

Well, she was trying now, and it was while poking him and singing her sixty-seventh off-key round of Vale’s national anthem (at three in the morning, when an already sleep-deprived Oscar was becoming absolutely desperate) that a hand shot out and grasped her wrist mid-poke.

“Please, Miss Rose,” a weary Ozpin said. “That’s quite enough.”

He wasn’t looking at her. He wasn’t looking at anything, really, just sitting up on the bed cross-legged. Ozpin let her go as if he’d touched fire and wrapped his arms protectively around himself, hunched over.

Ruby suddenly felt very, very uncomfortable.

“We need to talk,” she said, sitting down a little ways away from him. He snorted.

“Talk. I suppose that’s what you do mean, given the lack of the rest of your teammates.” She pursed her lips, wanting to retort, but the vision of Yang screaming at him in the snow while they all watched came back and she sighed instead.

“… why didn’t you trust us?” she began instead.
That made him pause. Ozpin did raise his head then, and the look in his eyes was almost frightening in its intensity. “Do you know,” he began, “that before I met you and and the others in Mistral, there were exactly nine people in the world who knew about Salem? Who knew the Maidens, about who and what I am? The headmasters of the schools, the Maidens, Glynda and Qrow. That’s all. The Maidens have to know because of what they are and what they hold. The others… they are all people I knew for decades, people I trusted with my life.”

A shadow crossed his face; a shaky breath escaped him, his shoulders bowing a little more. “And then I met Qrow in Mistral and discovered he told you almost everything. I didn’t have a choice in that moment. So I decided to trust you - you, four students, children I never intended to involve in this war but you planted yourselves there anyway.

“So I prepared you as best I could. And the rest of your team came, accusing me of hurting two people I—” Another pause. Another shaky breath. “There is no one in this world I trust more than your uncle, Ruby. No one.”

“Even now?”

“Even now.” Ozpin shook his head. “I trusted the rest of your team as well, because how could I trust you and not them? Teammates must be able to share things between them, to hold each other up. So I trusted you all, with secrets I would rather never share with anyone.”

Ruby had been chewing her bottom lip the whole time, listening. And - it hadn’t seemed like such a big deal then, when he’d told them. It’d seemed exciting, even. Knowing such an important person, being part of something so heroic. Saving the world, like a fairy tale.

But fairy tales weren’t real. She knew that now.

“Why did you lie about the relic, then? If you trusted us so much?”

Another snort of laughter, devoid of humor. “It draws Grimm as much as one upset person does. If it had been more of a draw, Oscar would have drawn—”

“No. About the questions.”

Ozpin closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

“Well,” he said, his voice cold. “We’ve seen what happens when you’re allowed to ask them, now, haven’t we?”

Ruby felt a bit as if she’d been punched. “We didn’t know—”

“No. You didn’t. I hope the answers were to your satisfaction.”

“You’re being cruel!” she cried, heart stung by the accusation in his words.

He laughed, a terrible hiccuping sound. “Am I? Was it not cruel of you to force me to relive the worst moments of my life? Being brought back and torn apart again and again because the gods needed a new toy to argue over? My own stupidity and arrogance? Being betrayed and—”

His voice caught; Ruby could, she realized in horror, see fresh tears sliding down his cheeks. “My children,” he choked, and fell silent.

She didn’t dare touch him. He was too silent, too terrible in his grief.
“And you - all of you,” Ozpin whispered after several long moments. “Every one of you who have
ever found this out - that Salem is as immortal as I - you all turn. Give up. How many times have I
lost friends - allies - my life to the people I loved because you cannot see beyond that one
godsdamned thing!”

Ruby jerked back, silver eyes wide. “But if she can’t be-”

“Can the Grimm ever be completely stopped? They existed long before Salem and I ever walked
this planet, and they’ll exist long after we’re gone. Does that mean fighting them is a waste?”

“It’s not that simple!”

“No,” he sighed, and curled back into himself again. “it’s not, and yet it is. Because life is precious,
Ruby. It is a gift. Humans live and love and change the world and that is what I have been fighting
to protect all these millennia.” He flexed his fingers in front of him, eyes gone soft and
immeasurably sad. “That world would hate me if it knew who I was. You’ve proven that. But I still
love it so.”

Ruby looked at her hands and felt terribly, terribly small.

“When will you come back, Professor?” she asked softly.

He huffed a little laugh. “Not for a little while yet. Let the others calm their tempers first.
Remember why they’re here. The relic must be taken care of.”

She nodded and made to get up when a small hand caught her wrist again. “You might,” Ozpin
said gently, “remind Qrow of a mission he had back when you and your sister were very little. I
believe he saved you both from a pack of Beowolves?” When her eyes went wide, he
continued, “He’d saved a village before that. Diamant. It still stands today, south of Vale. You
might want to remind him of it, and of your love for him. I think he needs it.”

“He needs you too,” she said, and regretted it as soon as his face fell.

“We’ll see,” he said, voice choked.

She made it to the doorway before turning around; Ozpin was still sitting there on the edge of the
bed, framed in moonlight from the window, somehow both towering and yet so very small and frail
and terribly, horribly human. “Do you regret trusting us?” Ruby asked, fingers curled around the
doorframe.

Ozpin bowed his head and laughed silently, eyes shimmering with unshed tears. “Yes,” he
said. “Good night, Miss Rose.”
Chapter Summary

a three-word prompt by MorteLise: DMV and disaster

Yeah, those words go together pretty perfectly, lol

“The hell d’ya mean, you don’t know how to drive?!”

Qrow knew Ozpin held… secrets. Some were huge—like Salem and the Maidens—and some were just. Ridiculous. As ridiculous as the man himself. Like, hiding the fact that he was naturally left-handed (“The things you learn when you break your dominant hand repeatedly will surprise you.” “No they won’t.”) or that he hated brussel sprouts (“The Gods put those on this planet to spite me.”) or even his pyrophobia—well, no, that one made sense.

In context, even his inability to drive made sense. Cars had only been around for about a hundred years, and the modern automobile was vastly different to what Osiah had driven. And Ozymandias hadn’t needed to—kings didn’t drive themselves around, after all. Ozpin rarely left Beacon Academy anymore and even when he had, he flew, or took group transport. He had no need to learn.

… maybe Qrow shouldn’t have made fun of him for it. But still.

“This is stupid,” Ozpin snapped. Crammed into a hard plastic chair, his elbow in Qrow’s ribs, he stood out like a sore thumb among the average citizens waiting their turns. Even worse, they were all craning their heads or raising their scrolls to get a glimpse of the elusive professor outside of his natural habitat. Qrow had to bite back a grin.

This would be all over social media by the end of the day—the mighty Professor Ozpin vs. the Vale DMV.

Qrow knew who he had his bets on, and it wasn’t his husband.

“I simply do not need to drive,” Ozpin continued to mutter, scowling at the pamphlet in his hands. Cheerful Beowolves—cheerful roadkill Beowolves—grinned up at him, the words SILLY DRIVER, ROADKILL ARE FOR GRIMM: Mike and Marty’s Guide to Safe Driving over the top. “I can walk. Or fly. I am a registered airship pilot.” He rubbed at his eyes. “It’s fine. This is fine. If I can fly one of those, I can drive a car.”

Qrow eased the paper out of his hands and let his chin rest on his shoulder, close enough that Ozpin could feel his breath on his ear. “Well, you are good at driving me out of my mind.”

Ozpin turned scarlet.

Someone’s camera flashed.
“Name?”

“Ozpin.”

Silence.

“Ozpin?” He gestured at himself. “Professor Ozpin? You must be familiar.”

“First name Professor, last name Oz- can you spell that for me, please?”

Qrow leaned against the wall, fighting back a smirk as the driving instructor looked at Oz expectantly. Barely five foot two, younger than half his students, and yet she had Ozpin so rattled that the much taller man was fidgeting. Naturally, this meant that Qrow had to record the whole interaction.

“It’s not….” Ozpin sighed. “My name is Ozpin. O-z-p-i-n. I’m a professor at Beacon Academy.”

A blank look. “So, is ‘Ozpin’ your first or last name?”

“Ms. Grey, it is a mononym—” At her unimpressed look Ozpin cast his eyes heavenward, hands now tellingly tight on his cane. “… first.”

“Last name?”

“Branwen,” he said, and Qrow choked.

The newly christened Ozpin Branwen (“Finally decided to take my name, huh?” “If you don’t hush I swear I will end you.”) tried slouching further into the car’s seat. His knees hit the steering wheel. Qrow, in the backseat, was nearly folded in half. “I’m not sure this is… is this the only car you have available, Ms. Grey?” he asked the instructor.

She smiled.

“This is a standard size automobile, Mr. Branwen. If you cannot drive this, we will not grant you a license.”

Translation: *suck it up, buttercup.* Ozpin sighed and leaned his head back, only for it to collide with the car’s roof. “Very w—er. Why are there three pedals?”

Uh-oh.

Ozpin wasn’t a terrible driver. Reckless, and with a lead foot, but Qrow had felt good about this after he’d given him a few lessons.

However, Qrow had not taught him how to drive a stick shift.
“If you do not feel comfortable, Mr. Branwen, we can reschedule. The next available appointment is in four months—”


It wasn’t fine.

“Wow,” Qrow marveled, an arm slung over Ozpin’s shoulders as they watched the car—cars, multiple, all six lanes of the highway closed—go up in flames. “I figured it’d go south, but. Damn, Oz.”

Ozpin let his head fall into his hands. Sitting in the back of another ambulance, Ms. Grey was doing the same. “I failed,” he mumbled.

“Yeah,” Qrow agreed, shaking the soot out of his hair. Across the way, another car burst into flames; firefighters swarmed the mess like bees, flinging water and ice Dust at the wreckage. “Hey, at least no one was hurt. And we can’t blame my Semblance for it this time.” He affected a snooty, feminine voice. “This is all on you, Mr. Branwen.”

That shouldn’t have earned a laugh out of him, but Ozpin chuckled anyway. “Thank you ever so much for the comfort in my time of need.” He sighed and leaned up heavily against him. “Will they let me try again, do you think?”

“What, get your driver’s license?” Qrow laughed. “Maybe in a hundred years.”
Gloved hands clutched the roll of bandages tightly to his chest. “A scorpion Faunus?”

Qrow leaned forward into the little mirror above the bathroom sink, pulling down one eyelid and peering into his reflection. “Name was Tyrian.” Apparently satisfied with what he saw, he turned to look down at Ozpin—he’d never get used to that, having to look up at Qrow like a child.

Oscar snorted in the back of his mind. Now you know how I feel.

Now’s not the time, came the thought, just as Qrow continued. Their eyes went to a long thin scar across his upper stomach, still pink and raw. “He called her his ‘queen’.”

Ozpin went cold inside, waves of terrorhurt rage rolling through hard enough that Oscar flinched back. “Salem.”

“… yeah.” Qrow ran his thumb over the scar. “It’s not a big deal. We beat him. Ruby cut the bastard’s stinger off, it was great–”

“He poisoned you.”

“–except for that.” Ozpin pointed him sternly at the toilet; Qrow dropped the lid down and sat, scowling. “How’d you know?”

“The medication they gave you.” Oscar’s horror added to his own made his hands shake. “Scorpion venom damages the heart, Qrow! You’re fortunate it didn’t kill you!”

Qrow scoffed and looked away, a scowl marring his handsome face. “Fortunate, my ass.”

Oz? Oscar’s voice shook. What’s wrong?

His Semblance is misfortune. He turned his gaze down to the floor, Qrow’s tattered sweatpants too high on his ankles and bare feet twisting in the shag rug, twisting like Ozpin’s heart kept doing in his chest. … and I have only made it worse.

Oscar’s half of their soul nudged against him, a gentle attempt at comfort. He pressed back in gratitude.

“I screwed up.” They both looked up at that, Qrow still turned so he was talking to the wall. “I knew Salem would be after Ruby, and I let the kids be bait anyway. And I should have known Ruby wouldn’t back down from the fight.” His sigh echoed off the bathroom walls. “I could have got her killed, Oz.”

Ozpin curled a small hand around Qrow’s wrist. It was—all he could do, now. “But you protected her,” he soothed. “She’s alive, because of you.”
“And because of me you’re dead!”

Oh, Oscar breathed, a tiny sound drowned within the sudden hurricane of Ozpin’s grief.

Qrow rubbed his hand over his heart, grimacing. “I shouldn’t be here. Oz, you—why didn’t you let me go with you? The world doesn’t need me!”

“I need you!”

Ozpin clutched Qrow’s wrist to his chest, curled around it and shaking and fighting back sudden tears. Slamming the walls down between him and Oscar—he couldn’t allow himself to feel—but ohgods everything hurt, everything had been hurting for so goddamned long, death and rebirth and being lost and this reunion, being so close and yet forever separated, and it was his own fault Qrow was hurting, that everyone was in so much pain—

“Hey.”

Qrow’s arms around him, a hand in his hair, just gently holding him—the sound of his heart echoed under his ear, a steady beating. Oscar’s concern, warm as sunshine. “I survived, Oz. I’m fine. It’d take more than some runty bug to keep me down.”

Keep him down? No. But—Oscar ached from guilt not his own. Qrow’s shoulder’s bore a weight he was never meant to carry. There were fractures, within them, now.

Ozpin closed his eyes. Tyrian’s venom wouldn’t kill them, but Salem’s venom could destroy them all.
Oscar’s chest hurts.

(v7e2 spoilers!)

His chest hurts.

Dismissed from Ironwood—James—the General’s office, Oscar only has half an ear turned to the conversation between Ruby and the Ace Ops, or—he doesn’t know who they are. He doesn’t care.

His chest hurts.

The place where he imagines Ozpin’s half of his soul resides aches constantly, now, has since the confrontation in the snow. Below and behind his heart, in the hollow emptiness of his ribcage, a tiny little sphere of misery and self-hatred. No one has noticed it, how it burns when he’s surrounded by them, how it doubles and turns knifelike whenever he hears Qrow’s voice. Oscar doubts they’d care. Well, Ruby would. Maybe.

But he’s not watching her. Neither of them are.

They’re watching Qrow, ambling down the staircase behind them. They’re watching Ironwood—James, always James—follow behind. Oscar’s watching them talk and Ozpin’s watching them embrace and Oscar’s vision goes gold and it’s Ozpin’s heart that rends in two because it’s James and it’s Qrow and he’s close enough to touch them but he can’t and he’s supposed to be there with them and he failed them and ohgods he’s going to break—

“Oscar?”

And it’s over. It’s Oscar and Oscar alone who looks up at her. She looks strangely out of focus. “Yeah?”

She places a gentle hand on his cheek. It’s wet, and cold. “You’re crying,” she says. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine.” He smiles up at her. “Just thinking about how we got to where we are now.”

His chest hurts.
Roses and Wine

Chapter Summary

Sometimes it's easier to let the flowers do the talking.

Chapter Notes

From September, a drabble prompt on Tumblr that I forgot to upload.

Qrow’s knowledge of wine could be summed up as the following:

1) it came in different colors;
2) it was made with grapes; and
3) and the hangovers from it made him puke till his eyes bled.

A wine connoisseur he was not.

But Ozpin was, and this was for him - which also explained the bouquet of tea roses nestled in the crook of his elbow, desperately trying to make him sneeze. Because Ozpin - deserved this kind of fancy shit. Because Qrow wanted to be nice.

Not because he felt guilty about - about almost getting Ozpin killed on a stupid mission, or about the nights Ozpin had spent slumped in a hospital bed with the respirator clicking off each breath, or the absolute relief that had crossed his face when he came to and saw Qrow whole and standing.

“Perhaps a Sauvignon Blanc? It is quite warm.”

And there was Ozpin. Leaning a bit heavier on his cane than usual, a bottle of Qrow’s favorite scotch tucked in his elbow - a small bouquet of pink and peach alongside.

Summer had taught Qrow about the language of flowers, once. Red and white rosebuds. Please forgive me.

Dark pink and peach roses. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Qrow looked up at him, and that gentle, worried smile. “… Maybe we should talk, huh?”

“I would like that,” Ozpin said, and Qrow felt himself begin to hope again.

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