Jewels in the Rough

by Blacsparrow

Summary

Ruby grows up on the streets of Vacuo after being taken in under the wing of an older urchin with stark red eyes and mint green hair. As stealing to survive becomes stealing for fun the two set their eyes on a new city, with all new riches just waiting to be plucked by sticky fingers and adorable smiles.
"Why do you think she was out here?" A voice asks growing louder as it approaches.

"I think I don't care. The important part is that she picked a fight she clearly shouldn't have with the Grimm." An older, gruffer voice replies. "Now help me turn her over."

A wet cough, the sound of droplets hitting the dry ground. "P-please help. My daughter, my Ruby."

"Holy shit, she's alive. Hey, help me with her. Don't worry miss we'll get you to town you're gunna be fine." the younger voice says trying to sound soothing despite the panic setting in.

"Don't bother, did you see her back? She's all torn up, barely clinging as it is. She won't make it five feet, let alone the five miles to town. I've got a Scroll, let's see... Ah yup. She's a Hunter, probably bit off more than she could chew. Looking around though she put up one hell of a fight, her bloods all over. Check the bundle, she was guarding it pretty hard, look, the grounds all torn up around it but it's untouched."

Another wet cough, the sound of something being dragged. "Take her... please take her." The woman's voice, reedy and barely there.

"Tough as hell aren't you. You Hunters and Huntresses are something else." The gruff voice comments

"It's a baby man." the young voice calls out and fussing can be heard along with rustling fabric.

"It's a wha-?" older replies being cut off by a loud fussy cry of a small child not yet old enough to speak.

"Oh man, this is who she meant. This must be Ruby huh? We should bring her to town with us. We're already turning in her weapon and Scroll. They're too hot to pawn off, we can just drop her off with them." Younger one comments, trying to make soothing noises to the small child that didn't seem to be actually helping as it only grows louder.

"Just leave the kid man, its Grimm bait with all the screaming and hollering. We've got the Lien and valuables. Leave the corpse, leave the baby and come on. Before those monsters come back for it." Older man growls out, his tone tinged with nervous tension bordering panic.

The younger one stops his comforting abruptly. "Leave her? No way, it's one thing to loot a corpse man but we leave this girl here and we'll be killin' her, not the Grimm. I don't want to become a murderer. She can't be more'n a year old. I'm bringing her."

"Fine, fine whatever. You deal with the brat but we're moving now. I'm not sticking around here anymore." Older replies the sound of boots moving down the road.

"Don't worry Ruby, I'll make sure you get back okay." The younger one states after she finally quiets down, letting out a few small yips before yawning. "Heh, fuckin adorable that. Keep that up and they'll eat out of your hand." The young man comments before the sound of his boots joins those of his companion albeit at a quicker pace as he moves to catch up.
~10 years ago~

"RUBY ROSE!" A shrill voice cries out and furry, red tipped ears perk and swivel from across the building. The owner of those ears folds them back and whines pitifully.

"Wow Ruby, what did you do to make her mad this time?" A girl with mint green hair asks wincing at the screeching voice growing louder.

"I don't know Em! I did all my chores and haven't left the room since, besides meal times!" the younger, red cloaked girl replies, her fear evident in her voice as a low whimper escapes her. Wide silver eyes misting over with tears.

"Calm down Ruby, you should go to her. You know she only gets worse if she has to find you herself. And even if she doesn't manage to find you, you know you can't avoid her forever." Emerald suggests biting her lip as the tears start to fall from the eyes of the Faunus girl.

As Ruby stands up her head remains bowed and she stumbles out of the room heading towards the loud voice still screaming her name.

A pair of red eyes follows her out, the lip caught between the green hair girl's teeth stinging with pain as she fights to keep herself from divulging her plan. It's only once Ruby is out of ear shot she allows herself to speak, and even then, at a low murmur to herself.

"Don't worry Ruby, I almost have everything I need and when I do. We'll never have to deal with her or anyone else again."

Ruby was one of the kids that hits the system and bounces around from one home to another as her social worker tries to find a home for her. She's cute and young so her chances went up. But the longer she went without finding a home the lower the odds got. Common knowledge for orphans. The older you get, the less likely it is anyone will want to take you in, and the more you move around, the more people begin to think something is wrong with you. Getting passed over so often also hardens the heart against future potentials, only confirming the worry. It's a vicious cycle. Eventually the social worker gave up, placing Ruby here until someone comes in that Ruby might fit with. That was a few months ago. And when she arrived, the first thing she did was make friends with the older girl with red eyes.

Emerald hops off her bed and pulls out a box from beneath filled with borrowed, stolen, and home repaired camping gear along with whatever Lien the little girl has managed to squirrel away over her time at the orphanage. She would have left some time ago honestly, but after Ruby arrived the plan changed. She refused to leave her friend behind here. Plans for one became plans for two and the little girl began her gathering all over again.

~7 years ago~

A girl stands outside of the park crying and trying desperately to wipe her tears away as she looks around, looking lost and confused as to what to do. Short black hair spilling out from under her hood tipped with red. With such an adorable girl crying and alone it isn't long before a kind soul approaches to aid her.

"Hello little one, what's the matter? Why are you crying?" A calm voice asks from above her. Stranger, children are taught to shy away from strangers and that's just what the crying girl does, leaning and taking a few steps away. She still manages to answer however. Tiny voice warbling with sadness and a little fear.
"I-I, lost m-my money! Miss. Lisa s-said to use it t-to get a r-ride home on the b-bus but I was playing wh-while I waited and it m-must have fell out of my p-pocket!" The girl replies after leaking from her silver eyes as she puts her hand in her pocket turning it inside out to show the hole in it. "N-now I can't g-get on the b-bus and it's too f-far to walk!" She cries her head bending down as her hands return to her eyes rubbing at them while choked sobs escape her.

"You poor dear, you must be so scared, who left you out here alone?" the kind woman asks kneeling down. Already wondering if she will need to inform the authorities.

"Mommy is a-a-at work. A-and Miss Lisa was with me b-but she had an emer... mergen... something bad happen! S-so she had to go. She told m-me to wait f-for the bus but I got bored..." The small girl cries her sobbing coming under control but it's a near thing barely held in.

"And you know how to get home on your own? Do you have to do this often?" The woman asks carefully.

"O-oh no ma'am, this is the first time. U-usually I go back with Miss Lisa or mommy." The tearful girl replies.

The lady seems to come to a decision and pulls out her purse, giving the girl a few Lien cards in small denominations. "Here, use this for the bus and be more careful okay? If someone in charge tells you to do something it's important you listen okay?" The woman says her heart warming at the sudden wonder in the girl's eyes at being rescued. Her fears of not making it home banished instantly as a broad smile crosses her face.

"R-really? Th-thank you miss!" The girl says after getting the money. She starts towards the bus stop at the corner before pausing and turning back. "Oh, and I'm not a deer! I'm a wolf!" The girl replies giving a little twirl. Her furred ears exposed as her hood drops the cloth on her back moving aside to expose a wagging tail behind her.

At first the woman is confused, failing to understand the joke until she remembers that she called the jovial little girl a 'poor dear' previously. A play on words from the adorable little girl while not terribly funny on its own, the complete assurance from the tiny child that her joke is comedy gold brings a laugh from the older lady.

With a wave to the child and assured she did something good today she turns away, missing how the little wolf girl passes the bus stop and rounds the corner instead. Fixing her cloak and hood to cover her heritage as she walks. Her tail still wagging happily underneath, thankfully disguised by her steps so as not to be immediately obvious as the Lien is added to a pouch and placed in a bag at her waist.

The girl travels down streets and alleys with the rapid pace of someone who has been down them several times before, her path bringing her into the poorer and more industrial sections of the city. Abandoned buildings that were left over after the end of the Great War saw the need for them diminish. At one such building the red girl stops and looks around before bending down and sliding a square of sheet metal aside exposing a hole that she crawls through, the metal closing behind her.

"Hey Em! I'm home!" The girl calls out, pulling down her hood as she walks up a metal staircase that has seen better days. Honestly, this whole section of the city had but, until the government decides they can do something with it and starts tearing it down. For now though, two little girls call it home.

The red cloaked girl tilts her head, her canine ears pivoting to listen in for any sound of her friend. Hearing nothing she frowns, checking the time on an old manual watch they keep turning. It's only issue being that some of the spokes were broken on the winding dial so if you're not careful where
you stop winding it could spin back and potentially destroy the rest. Of course once it was a little broken, it didn't matter that it was still functional, it was broken, and therefore thrown away. The girl was slowly coming to the conclusion she was the same way. Functional, but still broken. It's only a matter of time before her friend realizes it and throws her away too. She might have decided to do just that. After all, she is late.

Not a surprise really. Emerald always pulled in more money than she could. But not for lack of effort. She wakes up first, makes sure food is ready for her and Emerald before heading out and carefully picking a new place to ply the kindness of strangers for their Lien. The only issue being that she can't use the same place twice or risk being caught by a commuter. Other places she avoids, either due to police presence being too close, a local gang having already claimed it, or Emerald told her to. She asked once why that area but all the mint haired girl would say is something about red lights and it being for adults.

Emerald makes more though because she doesn't need to ply her image to separate a person from their money. She only needed to get within arm's reach of their valuables. The young girl watched in awe once as Emerald took a guy's watch right off his wrist without him noticing. It was incredible and she immediately begged the older girl to teach her. She said when the younger girl was older.

With a sigh the red girl sits on a mattress made of cushions torn from tossed chairs and stolen from abandoned couches, stitched together with copious amounts of duct tape and covered in a thin sheet, washed whenever they can afford to use a public cleaners. Her arms wrapping around her knees and pulling them close. Hand reaching up to draw down her hood covering her folded ears as she shift to lay on her side. Perhaps today is the day when she ends up all alone.

She almost doesn't hear the sound of their entrance opening and closing. Her ears perk under the hood. Instead of darting out to greet her partner she does as she was told and climbs up to the rafters carefully, quietly watching and waiting to see who entered her home.

She stops bothering however when a familiar head of mint green hair enters the 'bedroom' and sits herself down on the 'bed'. They only had enough cushions to make one.

The Faunus girl drops to the floor in front of Emerald, having learned her lesson after ruining their last bed by landing on it, before leaping at the girl, hugging the older thief around the waist tightly and burying her nose into Emeralds chest.

"Whoa! Ruby, what's up?" She asks but frowns when all she gets in reply is a soft whimpering sound from the little wolf girl.

As the younger girl remains silent Emerald sighs figuring the reason and wrapping her arms carefully around Ruby's waist to return the embrace. "How many times do I have to tell you Ruby? I'm sticking around. You and me. That's not going to change for anything. Unless... You're planning to leave me?" Emerald asks, injecting concern into her voice.

Ruby's ears perk and immediately lay flat she shakes her head rapidly, refusing to lift it from the older girls chest. The answer hadn't needed to be given anyway. Emerald already knew the younger girl wouldn't abandon her. And while she did feel bad about manipulating the smaller girl by faking her concern over it, she needed to make a point to Ruby who otherwise would have trouble coming to that conclusion herself. Years of being told that your social worker would find you a happy home only to see nothing coming from it? It's little surprise most orphans don't put much, if any, value in the words of others, even a close friend. It still leaves a bitter taste in the young thief's mouth.

With a small smile, she gently breaks the embrace leading Ruby back towards their bed before taking a seat with the smaller girl. "Sorry I was late Ruby, I made a detour and picked up some food from
the market. And something special for you." She adds, pretending she doesn't notice the sudden rapidly wagging tail behind the little wolf girl. "But first, let's see how much we made today yeah?"

Pulling out her own pouch, she separates the cards by amount into piles watching as Ruby pulls out her earnings and frowns at the comparison between the two her meager earnings, nowhere near that of the green haired thief. She bites her lip as she separates the cards out and adds them to Emerald's stacks. All small amount cards and not even as many of those as the older girls.

It doesn't seem to bother Emerald at all however as she grins, reaching over to rub Ruby's head affectionately. Her fingers flexing to scratch behind the ears that were about to droop, causing them to perk upright again. "Good job Ruby, we'll be set for a few days with this easily. Get the stash okay?"

Ruby nods and darts away, climbing up to the rafters again to get a long box kept closed with a belt that rattles with Lien cards as Emerald starts splitting the piles in half. When Ruby hits the ground again she removes the belt and opens the box, her hands pulling the cards inside out and dividing them into stacks just like their earnings. The two girls combining the much larger amount with half of their current earnings before starting to swap out smaller amounts in the box with larger denominations from what's left of their earnings.

The two girls have the goal of buying their own home. It didn't have to be big or fancy, it didn't have to be in a nice part of town or even in the best of conditions. None of that mattered as much as wanting a place that would be theirs. They were hoping they would have enough by the time Emerald was old enough to own property. It didn't look like they would but the two girls were optimistic and that it might take longer than they planned for didn't matter so much as they had a goal, and they were together.

Money sorted and hidden away again the two got ready for their usual evening. Food, studies, and stories. Emerald liked to read and refused to let Ruby avoid learning even if they couldn't risk attending a school. They had checked. Too many questions on the entrance papers that if they let anything slip and someone went looking they would be found out in a hurry. In the end, it wasn't worth the risk.

"Did you get any meat Emy?" Ruby asks already salivating at the thought. Her friend mentioned a visit to the market for food and something special. Usually that meant meat. Unfortunately, as their little home didn't have electricity and thus, no refrigeration. So they had to eat it quickly so it was bought in small quantities, and the price of it made it an uncommon thing for the two.

"Sorry Ruby, it's just bread and a little cheese today. The treat comes after." Emerald offers, pulling out the wrapped loaf and splitting it and a wedge of cheese in half giving Ruby her share before taking a bite. Food had to be bought. Not to say they couldn't steal food really. But the best food they could afford regularly came from the stalls set up by the farmers that work the land in the rare fertile lands holding villages around Vacuo. The owners may not know the two girls were homeless per se but, they did know the two lived rough and were sometimes willing to help them out. In return for that kindness neither were willing to steal from them unless they were truly desperate.

"It's okay Em." Ruby replies, her tail still waving back and forth behind her as she starts to eat her food, her shoulder moving to the side to press against her friend. She has a good idea what the treat is now, having gotten a whiff when the food was pulled out but she tries to resist the urge as Emerald was trying to be mysterious about it and the cloaked girl didn't want to spoil it for her.

They ate slowly and during their little meal Ruby paused swallowing her food before setting the remains of her dinner in her lap so she could ring her hands properly in a hopeless attempt to assuage some of her nervousness.
"Hey Em?"

"Yeah Ruby?" The mint haired thief asks calmly, pausing the bite she was about to take. Curious why the smaller girl sounded so nervous.

"I want you to teach me how to earn like you." Ruby asks again. She asks all the time and is always turned away by the same explanations. But this time after sighing and turning to face the smaller girl to dissuade her of the need the older girl pauses looking into stubborn and determined eyes. The smaller girl is nervous sure, but she doesn't look at all willing to back down this time. So instead Emerald asks a question.

"Why do you want me to teach you that? And don't say it's because I make more than you, you know that doesn't bother me." Emerald tacks on to avoid the usual little argument that typically follows this question.

"I just wanna be more useful Em. I don't bring in nearly as much and I know you say you don't mind but we both know only one of us would make it on our own if we had to and it's not me. And don't say I'm too young either! You were younger than me when you started." Ruby defends biting her lip. Not wanting to admit that by being more useful Emerald would have fewer reasons to leave her behind. Her ears falling flat to her head as she waits for her friend to turn her down again.

Instead she hears a sigh. "Fine, you're right Ru. I'll teach ya. But never earn alone okay? I want to be there in case something goes wrong. Cause if you get caught they'll take you away and I'm not sure how long it will take me to find you again." The mint haired thief capitulates. Only to let out a grunt as a black haired missile impacts her chest, their food scattering on the mismatched bed.

After a gratuitous amount of nuzzling and gratitude they break apart and Ruby looks at the mess and blushes a bit looking adorably contrite despite her rapidly wagging tail. "Hehe, whoops?"

Emerald tries very hard to hold her glare on the exuberant wolf-girl… and fails miserably. She gives a weary sigh while palming her face and shaking her head. When the hand moves away however, there's a warm smile underneath. "Alright Ru, you clean up the mess and I'll get out the strawberries."

The thief didn't think Ruby could smile any wider than she was already. She was wrong.

~4 years ago~

A pair of young girls run quickly away from a group of chasing police officers. Both panting hard as they push themselves to escape. For years the two hadn't slipped up even once, but it appeared as if one of their previous marks had noticed them again in the crowd and called the authorities. And instead of making a scene right then, he followed until they arrived before calling out the two young thieves. They couldn't go home, not with police right behind them. They had too much to lose if their little hideout was discovered.

So they ran down twisting alleyways and crowds, but with shorter legs whatever distance they managed to place between them was soon lost as more officers joined the chase. At this rate it would only be a matter of time before they either stumbled across a Hunter or one would be called in, and then they would be screwed. With a frown, Emerald grabs Ruby by the hand before speaking up.

"Ru, we need to split up. If they catch us both we're up a creek. But if they only get one of us the other can look for them and help them escape. Besides, we have a better chance of slipping away alone. You remember where to meet up right?" The older girl asks getting a nod from Ruby. The cloak makes her too noticeable though, she's almost sure the younger girl will get caught but Emerald
won't let her stay caught for long. That is a certainty.

"Yeah Em, I'll see you there soon." Ruby replies before they break away from each other. Both already worrying about the other.

The wolf girl leaves her hood up as she runs, her cloak billowing behind her. She can hear the officers still in pursuit as she turns the corner and her eyes shoot wide. She hadn't been paying enough attention. The alley she turned into is long, wide, and unobstructed. With no choice left to her she breaks into a flat out sprint, the fence closing off the other end has a hole she can slip through, she just has to reach it before the police can grab her.

Her legs pump hard, pushing her to go faster and faster. Desperate for more speed as she hears the police closing in behind her. Sharp hearing giving away their harsh breathing. She can almost feel the hands reaching out to grab her, to stop her and pull her back and separate her from Emerald. Something she absolutely does not want to happen.

So she pushes harder, her legs screaming as the muscles burn for relief. She's only halfway and desperate to make it, she just needs to go faster. So she pushes even more and suddenly, she feels something resisting. With the sound of the officers behind her and thoughts of Emerald ahead she shoves harder still.

It comes in a rush. A wave of invigorating energy, a red glow coating her skin. Ruby feels lighter than air as her legs pump with fresh strength pushing harder to move faster. And then she did.

In a flurry of spiraling petals, Ruby covers the distance as if flying. Her body shooting forward leaving the officers in the dust, literally. The dust cloud left behind obscures their vision completely as she darts through the hole in the fence and out of sight.

The red cloaked girl takes her time to ditch her pursuers before slowing down and running normally, the trail of petals leading away from their meeting spot just in case. There is no such thing as being too cautious when running away from the authorities. The downside was that sending them off in the wrong direction means Ruby has to backtrack the extra distance normally. The temptation to run like she had before bubbling under her skin and she shivers with anticipation.

Her ears perk on her approach to the meeting place as she hears what can only be Emerald sniffling. That's weird. Em doesn't cry, Emerald has never cried. At least not anywhere the younger girl could see. Looking back, she knew there were times back in the orphanage but since their escape Emerald has always been strong and if not happy than at least content. Even when during the harsher times and nights the temperature turned dreadfully cold. The two always found comfort and solace with each other, it was just how they were.

So a sniffling Emerald simply struck Ruby as wrong on every level. The shorter girl quickening her steps until she rounded the corner into the area they chose as their emergency spot. A little ring in the center of a scrap yard where an old broken vehicle with intact windows was meant to serve as shelter if they ever lost their warehouse. Some canned food, water, and a little Lien stashed under the passenger seat to get by.

It's here Ruby spots her best and only friend. Sitting in the trunk space of the car with her legs drawn up to her chest, face buried in her knees. A position for the two usually seen in reverse. Ruby gives a little smile realizing the tears are for her.

"Em, don't cry, I'm okay." Ruby calls out and the sniffling stops immediately, mint green hair bouncing as the head connected to it shoots upwards and turns to face the younger girl. Her eyes can't seem to believe what they are seeing as she pushes herself upright and stumbles climbing out of
the trunk. She struggles to stand and run at the same time. When she manages to get her feet under her she shoots over and grabs up the smaller girl, lifting her from her feet in a crushing hug.

"Em stop! Can't breathe!" Ruby gasps as Emerald's grip loosens, her shoulders are grabbed and she's held by them as the green thief looks her over head to toe.

"Ru, I'm so glad you're okay! How did you get away though? I was sure they would catch you and I'd have to find you." She mentions only to smile ruefully as Ruby wipes at her cheeks the clear away the tears. Another image in reverse, usually it's the older girl consoling the younger. "I got stuck, I hoped you would get into a place a lot better than the orphanage. Then I thought you might not want to leave by the time I found you so I hoped it was just as bad. And of course, that made me feel worse so I threw myself a pity party." She explains, this time getting a hug of her own.

"I'll always want to go with you Emerald. You're my best friend. I love you." The eleven year old wolf girl states burying her nose into Emerald's chest. Those little words getting the older chin to light up in a big smile.

"I love you too Ruby, I do want to know though. How did you get away?" Emerald asks looking at Ruby as she breaks away grinning. Her tail going a mile a minute as she skips a few steps away and abruptly dissolves into small rose petals. The small red flower pieces drifting to the ground before dissolving. Emerald looks around rapidly before noticing they form a trail that is already quickly fading away as sand and dust settle.

"R-Ruby?" Emerald calls out uncertainly only to jump when her shoulder is tapped from behind. She moves forward and spins around, an old and small utility knife in her hand as she faces whoever snuck up on her. Only to feel her legs go a little weak as she registers the perky triangle ears and waving tail of her friend and her sudden spike of adrenaline is cut off.

"Neat huh?" Ruby asks grinning wide at the baffled thief.

"Ruby... How? Are you teleporting? What's with the petals?" Emerald asks cautiously, poking Ruby until the wolf girl giggles and hugs her tightly. When Ruby doesn't answer right away Emerald gives the eleven year old a little shake. "Ruby come on this is important, what's going on?" She asks worried about what's happening.

"I don't know! Honest Em, I was getting chased and was all tired and they were gunna catch me and then suddenly whoosh!" Ruby says throwing her hands out beside her and swooping like a plane. "Suddenly I felt awesome and I could run really really fast! I don't know what the deal with the petals is but when I run fast they pop up. So I ran away from our meeting place and doubled back after a while."

Emerald looks around and notices all the petals have dissolved already before looking back with a smile. "That might not be necessary, all the petals are gone. But I'll steal a newspaper tomorrow and ask around 'The Fence' to see if they're bothering to look for us. Hey Ruby, I want you to try something." Emerald adds grinning as her young friend nods rapidly. "I want you to do whatever it is you're about to do before you run like that. But don't run."

Ruby looks at her in confusion before shrugging and closing her eyes before giggling. "Hehe, I feel tingly."

Emerald takes Ruby's hand and gives the back of it a little jab with her knife. The tip doesn't even scratch as it hits resistance before the skin. "Ruby, you unlocked your Aura. You know what that means?" Emerald asks getting a slow shake of Ruby's head in response her tail is still going though. "It means… we get to go to the library!" She says with a grin before Ruby groans and her tail stops
"Can we at least get some of the fun stories while we're there? You only look up boring stuff." Ruby moans petulantly.

"Hey, I like to read. And our education is important. Especially since we can't attend school. But if you behave and don't get us kicked out we can stop by a used book store after and get some story books for you. I want to learn more about what your Aura can do, and maybe unlock mine. It would give us a leg up out here, and you know how important things like that are." Emerald chides gently, getting a little nod from the still not-very-thrilled Ruby.

After waiting a moment Emerald grins at her. "How about we celebrate all of this by getting some meat for tonight?" She offers grinning as Ruby's mood immediately curves upwards. When she extends her hand Ruby wastes no time taking it and they head off towards the market.

~2 years ago~

Emerald gives a good natured sigh, watching Ruby skip and dance down the street in front of her. After unlocking their Auras and learning to use their Semblances, they were able to make money far easier. The meager hauls a thing of the past as they picked pockets with an ease that would astound. The dust Ruby kicked up when she ran covered the petal trail the first time she used it and the by-product of her Semblance was never looked into. Emerald found herself lifting valuables from unsuspecting people more and more, letting them sell the baubles at 'The Fence' for even more money. With the new income, they splurged a small amount here and there. Replacing worn and torn rags with proper fitting clothing. More substantial meals and, after much insistence from the wolf girl, weapons.

Emerald had been hesitant about the last part at first for a few reasons. The first being that Ruby wanted to build their own like students at the Hunter prep school, Oasis. It involved getting fake identifications as students so store owners would sell them the parts in the first place. The second being that the weapons being unique might draw attention and could possibly be identified, linking back to the pair. And finally, Emerald, despite knowing Ruby should be able to defend herself was hesitant to let her. The green themed thief has a protective streak a mile long for her little companion and was not the least bit embarrassed by the fact.

The fear of Ruby not needing her anymore gnaws at her mind on occasion and the irony of the situation being of what was just a few years before is not lost on her. Emerald has no trouble at all remembering the moments of hugging the younger teen while reassuring her that the mint haired thief wasn't going anywhere without her little Ruby.

Emeralds thoughts are dragged back to the matter at hand when Ruby gives a little twirl her cloak, spinning with her to reveal the happy wagging tail underneath along with the outfit. Like most clothing found in Vacuo it's a light and breathing material to help keep the hot sun from beating down on the wearer. Unlike most however, it's colored in black and dark reds. Colors that typically soak up the light and heat rather than repel them. Emerald had tried to offer more reasonable colors but Ruby had been stubborn. And to be fair, it did match her hair, her fur, and cloak fitting the small girl nicely. Emerald was just glad she managed to talk Ruby out of the tight fitting corset and into a more sensible shirt.

The most striking of all was the large red box suspended against the small of her back. Emerald had no idea what Ruby would come up with for her weapon after the thief had finished designing her own twin weapons, named Linked Avarice. The three phase weapons started as twin revolvers that sprouted curved blades to become sickles and chains so they could then be swung. All that was
needed for a phase change was a slight application of Aura. Mecha-shift is truly grand.

Still, once her design was finished, Ruby snatched it at disappeared for a few hours. She did this a few times for three days straight. Showing up at arranged times in their usual places, practically dancing in place with her eagerness to return to work. Emerald barely had time to hug the smaller girl and make her eat something before she would be off again.

Even with second hand or outdated parts Ruby worked wonders. Building up Emerald's weapons before diving into her own creation. And what a creation it was. A scythe far taller than the little thief with a long wicked blade curved over Ruby's head when she displayed her masterpiece to the older girl. Crescent Rose, truly a beautiful marvel. The first thing Emerald had asked was why. The answer was very flattering. 'I just saw your weapons and wanted to do something similar. They're so cool you know? I can't swing Crescent Rose around on a chain though, so it also converts into a halberd. Not sure how much use that forms going to get though.'

Her thoughts on the past, Emerald nearly misses Ruby pulling up to a stop next to a nondescript door. The little wolf girl knocks letting Emerald speak for them to the doorman before the pair are let inside.

'The Fence' as it's called by the locals. Is Vacuo's one stop shop for all your Black Market wants and needs. Split into four floors, rooms on the first are rented out to individual vendors by the day. Usually the things on sale here are small time. Things obtained by less than legal means and passed off as legit. It's run like a flea market here and anyone walking wouldn't think twice, the doorman doesn't stop anyone after all. Not this one anyway.

It's the second floor where things get a little more interesting. Rooms here are rented out anywhere from by the month to yearly contracts. They are bigger and thus are fewer in number. Some high ranking street gangs use these rooms to control their drug dispersion. Even buying and selling from other gangs and individuals. 'The Fence' is strictly neutral ground and no weapons are allowed past the first floor. Sentry guns, androids and armed guards are stationed here to make sure it stays that way. Beyond the gangs though are the arms dealers and actual fences that maintain their own spaces. The third floor of course is reserved for the even more illicit dealings. Things like laws, and basic human rights. Emerald and Ruby have never gone past the second floor or felt the need to.

This time is no different. The two walk through the first floor with ease. Pausing to turn over their weapons and the small utility knives they keep with them before heading up to the next floor.

Their destination is further in, past the drug dealers and weapon hustlers to where the more established and frequent room renters are located. A door with a simple plaque placed on it reading Mr. Everything. Certainly not the man's real name, it more described what he did. He is an astounding purveyor of goods and information and if he can't get it to you right away, he can get it to you quick enough. Nothing however ever had a set price. Everything depended on a combination of Mr. Everything's mood, the item or information itself, and how much he likes a particular customer.

For whatever reason Mr. Everything liked Emerald and Ruby, especially since they started showing up together. Neither willing to look a gift horse in the mouth Mr. Everything quickly became their go to fence. Because he doesn't just sell, he also buys. And always gives the two a better price then they would get elsewhere.

For a man with his reputation however, he certainly did not look the part. Shoulder length sandy blonde hair mixed with a sleepy expression and bland beige colored outfit sitting leaned over a simple wooden desk in a featureless room. A boring man, a boring room. Mr. Everything's carefully constructed image is clearly just that but still catches people off guard.
The two girls enter and take seats opposite him as he looks up and gives them both a lazy smile using his Scroll to lock the door to his office as he and Ruby both wait patiently for Emerald to begin what has become their tradition.

The thief rolls her eyes before pulling out a twenty Lien card. "Has anyone been looking into either of us?" she asks handing over the card before he shakes his head. They always start with this question as it is the most arguably important one. Low profile they may be, but urchins with unlocked Aura are very, very rare. And anyone finding out about either of them could bring either police, or unwanted attempts at recruitment for the local gangs.

"No you two are fine. Hello by the way. Have the counterfeit ID's been working fine?" He asks, leaning back in his chair as if looking for a new angle to get comfortable enough to sleep in.

Ruby lets Emerald do most of the talking. A habit born of practice when they were younger. Emerald was better at talking to people than she was. Ruby got pretty good at it too when she started to part people from their money several times a day, but when together, it was always the 'big sister' who spoke for the pair.

"Yeah, they worked great. Got us what we needed anyway. We don't use them as much anymore but they're still handy when Ruby sees something we can afford to upgrade our weapons with." Emerald comments, pulling out a bag from her belt and tossing it across the table to be caught in a lazy swipe of Mr. Everything's hand. He weighs it a moment before tipping it over letting the jewelry, watches, and assorted valuables tumble onto his desk. His eyes sharpen for just a moment taking it all in before a drawer opens and he pulls out a stack of cards counting out six hundred before pushing them across to Emerald.

"If you stay for five more minutes and listen to an offer while promising to at least think about considering it, I will add two more to it." He comments as Emeralds hands go to the sides of her chair. She pauses looking to Ruby who seems just as confused but shrugs back at her. Five minutes for two hundred Lien? That's an easy choice.

Emerald seems to weigh the choice carefully before gently removing her hands from the arm rests and extending one for the money. If you're getting paid, get as much as you can up front. Mr. Everything smiles and takes out two more cards handing one over and keeping the other on his side. "As you both know, I have a reputation for being able to acquire anything and everything for anybody who's willing to pay enough for it. On occasion, someone has the money to pay for me to acquire things owned by other people. Things those owners aren't interested in selling. When I get orders like this I have to hire out to acquire them. And with your skills, I would like to start hiring you two." He explains opening a different drawer on his desk and pulling out a pair of Scrolls sliding them across the table.

There's silence for a few long moments with Emerald thinking and the fence watching. Until that is, Ruby speaks up.

"Why us? Why now?"

"What do you mean Ruby?" Mr. Everything asks gesturing for the shorter girl to continue as Emerald places her attention on her companion.

"I mean, you've been in business for years. I know this isn't the first time you've gotten orders like this. Also, we're orphans and pick pockets. We've never done B&E and if someone's coming to you instead of trying to steal it themselves or hiring some thug to do it, there's probably some decent security. It seems like a lot of risk both for you and for us." She explains getting a nod from Emerald as they wait for Mr. Everything to compose a reply.
"It's really quite simple. I like you girls. You're honest, at least when you don't feel like you need to lie, and you've always been exceedingly careful. The closest you two ever came to getting caught doing anything happened two years ago and nothing before or since has you two anywhere near the police' radar. Never pick from the same crowd twice, always at different times, trading off so one can keep an eye out. With your Semblances in the mix I would be a fool not to hope you'll take work for me. Besides, I know my two favorite thieves. I think you'll have fun." He says with a wide grin before closing his eyes in his chair as if seriously considering the nap they might have interrupted.

"But just to give you a taste we'll start small." He continued. "I provide easy targets for you two to get your feet wet. You do the jobs and if you don't like it afterwards, just turn them in and tell me you're done. I'll find someone else and you two can go back to picking pockets. The pay will start good and only get better, and if you want to leave just say so." He adds, pulling open the same drawer he had the money in before setting an envelope on their side.

"Small easy targets. Details inside. No time limit but of course, the sooner the better. Talk to each other, take your time. Either way you can keep the Scrolls and the money. If you take the jobs and finish them, call the second number inside and you'll get me. The first number in one phone calls the other." He finishes before tipping his chair back onto its back legs.

The two young thieves share a long look, having a silent conversation before Emerald grabs the folder and Ruby the Scrolls. The older girl taking a moment after they stand to reply. "We'll talk it over and let you know what we decide."

~one year and six months ago~

A small girl with a red cloak stands perfectly still within a large mansion her position lay between two slowly swiveling security cameras that move just out of sync with each other.

She twitches as the radio clipped to one of her 'normal' ears crackles a moment and a voice comes in counting down slowly. When it hits zero Ruby darts out in a red blur, shooting under one of the cameras the petals disintegrating before they can reach the ground in her wake as she moves into another blind spot.

"Okay Ruby, we've got maybe sixteen minutes before the guards swap out so I need to be gone before then. Let's pick it up okay? I can hold them both if I need to but you know how hard that is so let's not get to that point. You remember the sequence?" Comes the smooth voice of her friend.

Ruby smiles and then grimaces in discomfort as her tail tries to wag from its position tied to her leg. "Yeah Em, three more in the hall and then out the window after I get the shiny thing." She replies with childish humor. The little thief can practically hear Emeralds eyes rolling through the radio as the younger girl struggles not to snigger.

"Okay, okay, let's get on with it. Now." She orders and Ruby shoots to the next spot pausing long enough to hear the next confirmation before shooting out again. The process is repeated until the little thief pulls herself into a room and closes the door behind her.

"I'm in. Hey Em, how much is Everything paying us for this one again?" Ruby asks, nearly skipping along to a display case in the room pulling a lock picking set from her pouch.

"Fifteen. He's already put half into our account so we need to deliver. You know how much I hate giving money back." Emerald replies as Ruby kneels down slipping her tools into her mouth for a moment as she looks at the case quizzically and just lifts the top with a small 'huh' that draws Emeralds attention.
"What is it? There shouldn't be any additional security. File said inside the room it's just the display case."

"Calm down Em. The previous owner of the shiny statue made my job a little easier is all. Left the display case unlocked." Ruby replies, grabbing the ugly and roughly humanoid shaped golden statuette stowing it in her loot sack before pausing and grabbing the velvet pouch sitting next to it with a shrug dropping it in with her lock picks before making her way to the window. Looking around it she sighs.

"Okay Em, I'm ready for my run. Let me know when you're ready for the alarms." Ruby comments and takes a moment to rock back and forth on the heels of her feet as her eyes swing around the room looking immediately at shiny baubles and intricate designs. Before she can be tempted to start filling her loot sack again Emeralds voice returns.

"Alright I'm almost out. Start moving, I'll see you soon."

It's all the instruction Ruby needs as she shifts left and right giving Emerald just a bit more time before she sets their calling card in the display case, a big green gem pictured over a bed of bright red flower petals. After closing the lid she moves to the window. Pausing as her fingers find the latch to unlock it. She would have come in from this point but they're locked and reinforced making them irritating if not impossible to open from the outside.

Throwing the window open wide the buildings alarm blares loudly and bars start to drop in order to cover the windows. They slam down hard and fast but not quick enough to stop the speedster thief from making it outside and halfway across the yard first. A trail of petals fading away as she reaches the fence and climbs up and over. Vanishing into the night.

It's three blocks to the east where Ruby finally comes to stop after turning into an alley. Her hood down. Cloak covering her as she leans against the wall. The red fabric on her head twitching at every little sound.

"I'm here Em." She comments into her radio. Getting a response from the mint haired girl just now walking into sight.

"I know, you ran right past me. I messaged Mr. Everything, drop off point isn't far. Jobs not done till it's out of our hands." She mentions smiling as Ruby peels herself from the wall and lowers her hood to walk next to her friend.

"Hey Em, have you thought about where we're going to live once you're old enough to sign for it? I mean we have more than enough now to buy something small outright. At the very least a big down payment if we pick a spot in a major city." The shorter girl asks, casually bumping into the older, taller thief as they walk with an easy smile.

"Well, I was thinking we would travel a little first. Visit all the kingdoms and see what they have to offer before picking a place to set down in. Getting excited about having your own bedroom Ruby?" Emerald asks in an odd tone before blinking as Ruby gives her an odd look in return.

"Well, I was thinking we would travel a little first. Visit all the kingdoms and see what they have to offer before picking a place to set down in. Getting excited about having your own bedroom Ruby?" Emerald asks in an odd tone before blinking as Ruby gives her an odd look in return.

"Why would I need my own room? We've always slept together Em." She replies and Emerald is unsure if Ruby understands the implications of them sharing a bed as they grow older. Still, they've always been together, wouldn't this just be the next logical step?

Emerald pauses and hesitates, bringing Ruby up short with concern for her friend who is now acting vastly out of character. "Em? I mean, if you want separate bedrooms I guess I can try and get used to sleeping by myself." The younger girl states, trying to take a step back and appease her partner.
Emerald doesn't say anything as she continues to hesitate looking at Ruby with a very worried expression that does nothing to soothe the unsettling feeling the younger girl is getting before she is grabbed, giving an animalistic yelp as the older girl tugs her into an embrace and kisses her firmly.

The lip to lip contact is different. Not in the placement, the two have exchanged chaste kisses on each other's cheeks, foreheads and yes, even their lips before. But this is different in length and feel. Before it was always a quick peck. Something chaste and sweet. This was neither of those. It was raw and hungry. Passionate and oh so very needy.

There is a raw emotion behind it as Emerald pulls Ruby closer to herself determined that if this is to be their last kiss then at least it would be a memory she would have to treasure. But the need to breathe becomes pressing and Emerald slowly moves to pull away before realizing Ruby is holding her just as tightly. Both panting gently as their eyes open. Red pools gazing desperately into silver for any manner of rejection, and finding none. "Ruby, will you be my girlfriend as well as my partner?" She asks knowing the answer she'll get now, but still desperate to hear it said.

"I wouldn't want anyone else." It's a quiet response, but after their both left grinning at each other with unbound happiness before sharing another long kiss. In some ways it's better than the first as both are expecting it and are able to express their joy through it. But in truth, the first will be the only one either remembered after the night was over.

"Wonderful. Let's finish the job and go home." Emerald states as they finally break apart. Ruby fishes something from her pouch and tosses it to Emerald who responds by catching it deftly before looking at what's in her hand. "What's in the pouch?" Turning the small velvet bag over. Whatever is inside is numerous and tiny.

"No idea, it was in the display case at the bottom. I almost missed it because the frame around the glass was hiding it." Ruby replies with a shrug as Emerald opens the draw strong top and looks in before closing it just as quickly. "What? What's in there?"

"Ruby, who keeps a bag of precious gemstones inside an unlocked display case? That guy apparently, and now? Now we get to sell them one by one. Tonight is definitely a steak night." Emerald adds as Ruby cheers and does a happy little dance, her tail wagging hard enough to push her cloak aside even as the older girl makes a mental note to buy fuel for their camping grill on the way home.

~one year ago~

Emerald sighs hanging up her Scroll. Before fishing one the calling cards she and Ruby had come up with from her pocket looking it over. The laminated card with its picture uniquely theirs. The mint haired thief was of two minds regarding their little signature. The upside of using them being that it helped them to build a reputation as thieves. A bigger reputation meant bigger and higher paying jobs. It also meant they could afford to be pickier about what they stole and from whom, as well as who they worked with.

But for everything good the cards brought them it also brought something neither wanted. Because a name is something people pay attention to. For two street urchins who had just wanted to get by, being under the radar was the way to live. Now they had a name. Tabloids called them 'The Green Petal Thief' A bit of a stretch considering the image on their card. The police are looking for a single perpetrator for their crimes which is good. But the fact they are looking at all isn't so great. There are a lot of robberies that can be laid at their feet, and with every new heist the tally goes higher.

"What did Everything want?" Ruby asks, leaning gently into Emeralds side as they look out over the busy market district. At the age of fourteen and sixteen respectively the two girls had been together
for the past decade, and at the rate they are going it doesn't look like they would be parting any time soon, if ever. The transition from friendship to relationship had only been awkward the first few weeks when they had both been trying to make it mean more than just being together. Awkward attempts at romantic gestures are cute but can get tiresome. They quickly realized it wasn't what they wanted though, and after that brief period of figuring out new mechanics, settled into their old comfortable ways. Albeit with small affectionate touches, lingering hugs and kisses mixed in.

"He was giving us a heads up. Someone is looking into the green petal thief. He's stalled them for time and is taking an obscene amount of money for any information he hands over but he can't hold out too long without damaging his reputation. Of course, he then sold us everything he had on his visitor dirt cheap. Which unfortunately wasn't much. Young woman, name unknown, age unknown, arrived in the city recently under an alias that lead nowhere and apparently, has a lot more money than her age or anonymity should imply. He thinks she might be from Mistral and wants us for a job that she doesn't want to run through him. That could mean anything from government work to something equally unsettling. He did provide that she's not with any police force. If she's government though then she's some kind of spy." Emerald replies with a frown on her lips.

"I don't like it Em, think it might be time to move?" Ruby asks shifting to take Emeralds hand between two of her own.

"Maybe… I'll ask Mr. Everything to arrange something for us. And we'll pack up our stuff at home just in case. We move it into storage and we can arrange with him to have it shipped to us if we do need to leave. It's only polite to hear what she wants first, she says anything we don't like and we can just go."

Ruby kicks her feet a bit letting her heels tap before responding. "Where are you thinking we'll go?" She asks

"Hmmm I'm thinking Mistral or Vale." Emerald replies not really liking the idea of living in the heavily militaristic society governing Atlas.

"Vale, definitely Vale. I heard Mistral is just as hot as Vacuo, only instead of a dry heat it's really humid. And I don't know about you, but I do not relish what that kind of humidity will do to the fur on my tail." Ruby replies removing one hand from Emeralds in order to hug the appendage to herself.

"Alright then. Vale it is." The older girl answers with a fond smile before leaning down to steal herself a kiss. "Want to go steal something?" She asks after the kiss is broken and her answer can be seen in the excited eyes and wagging tail of her girlfriend.

~six months ago~

Red eyes look through the glass separating shoppers from the assortment of jewels, rings and necklaces available. She looks uncertain as she focuses on a ring being displayed. A promise ring. The meaning of a promise ring relies entirely upon the person giving the ring. This is the fourth jewelry store she had come across and finally found one she wanted. A simple silver band with stylized hands wrapping around each other gripping a ruby in one and an emerald in the other. It's perfect.

She looks up at the smiling store owner with a grin of her own. "Could you pull out the ones in that section? I want to look at them closer." She asks reaching for her pouch and pulling out a small wallet as if checking it for how much she has with her. The motion seems to please him and he pulls out the tray setting it down for her to look at. Carefully she activates her Semblance, hiding her actions from the man even as she talks.
"How much is the one in the upper right corner?" she asks as her hand reaches out to take the one that actually caught her eye near the center. She doesn't listen to what he's actually saying as she clutches her prize in her hand.

"Damn, I don't have that much on me. I guess I'll have to come back for it. See you soon okay?" She says giving him a wave before turning to leave the shop when a woman's voice calls out.

"You're not going to pay for the ring you just grabbed?" She asks and Emerald winces having missed the woman entering the store after noticing the ring. Worse with her pointing it out, the shop owner blinks looking down at the tray and now noticing the missing item. Her semblance is great at making, near perfect illusions for those under her sway but when the discrepancy is pointed out to them the illusion shatters.

Turning on her heel Emerald starts running even as the man starts shouting from inside his shop. As she rounds the corner she chances a look back and grimaces as she sees a growing crowd of people chasing after her. The jeweler apparently has a lot of friends.

That in mind she starts running harder using her Scroll to send a message to Ruby before continuing her run towards an empty alley. The fence in it had a loose board she and Ruby used to use as a shortcut when they were younger. What she hadn't expected was that after entering the alley a woman would walk in behind her.

Whirling around to face the woman she leans forward her hands hanging back slightly to keep Linked Avarice well within her reach she confronts the woman with a wary and suspicious eye.

"How did you do that?" The woman asks taking a few steps closer. Like Emerald, she carries a weapon pair with hilts pointing to the sides from the small of her back but also, oddly, a quiver. The latter item suggesting the twin blades also combine into some form of bow.

"I don't know what you're talking about." Emerald replies denying the woman's words to buy herself time. The only people who carry weapons like that are Huntsmen, Huntresses, those training to become them, or criminals like herself and Ruby. All of which are bad news for her.

When the woman doesn't respond fast enough, Emeralds hands jerk back gripping the handles of her weapons.

"Don't" The woman commands getting Emerald to pause before she draws the revolvers. "Unless, you want them to hear you?" The mystery woman asks waving towards the street behind her where the voices can be heard growing louder. "You stole that ring, right from under the jeweler's nose." She states simply.

Emeralds hand moves protectively to the pouch holding her prize before looking back up with narrowed suspicious eyes.

"Except you didn't. You just reached out and grabbed it. While he responded with a smile. No idea what you had done until it was pointed out to him. That was no sleight of hand." She comments, her words tinged with a seductive purr. Were it not for the lack of any animal traits, Emerald would believe her to be a Faunus.

"Who are you?" The thief asks spotting red through the boards in the fence next to her that brings an instant relief. The cavalry is here.

"My name is Cinder. And as to what I want, I want you to work for me as a partner." The woman responds. "I have a lot to do and someone with your talents would be quite welcome." The Green
Petal Thief' has quite an astounding reputation after all."

Before Emerald can respond to that however the conversation is interrupted by the sound of shifting gears and metal before a large blade slices through the fence next to Emerald drawing a smirk from the thief and a scowl from Cinder.

"Sorry lady, but she already has a partner. And we don't do work on retainer." Ruby states simply walking over to Emerald herself and looking her girlfriend over before turning back to Cinder with a little smirk adorning her lips.

The intrusion does not sit well with Cinder at all apparently, who grits her teeth in aggravation her careful plan to approach the mint haired thief turning on its head far too quickly for her liking. "This is not a conversation for little girls to involve themselves in, why don't you come back after you've grown up, hmm?"

"Hey! I don't need to grow up, I drink milk! Right Em?" She states before looking to her girlfriend who is struggling to keep a blank face after Ruby's comment. Not trusting her words Emerald simply nods in response.

"Now if you want to hire us for a job get in touch with Mr. Everything, but I'll tell you the rules now so you won't be disappointed later. We're thieves, not assassins or hired thugs. We will steal, rob, loot just about anything we're capable of getting at but we don't hurt people unless we're left without an option. If it shines we'll take it. But don't ask us to go making a mess of someone's home. Also, we get half up front if we have Intel going in. All of it if we have to figure it out for ourselves." Ruby states clearly either unaware of the rage building on Cinders countenance or just not at all concerned with it as she folds up her scythe and puts it behind her back in its harness.

"You are making a grave mistake little girl. I am not someone you want to cross." Cinder replies, her words laced with venom.

"And now any job you do want us for will cost double for the threat. Come on Em, I want to look at some of the parts shops. I was on my way there when you messaged me." She says leading Emerald away by the hand. The older girl caught between cautiously watching Cinder and watching her blissful girlfriend with growing amusement.

When she finally looks away though, Cinder snaps. Pulling out her weapons and combining them before drawing an arrow. As it's loosed she can only stare in shock as Ruby grabs Emerald and dashes to the end of the alley in a flurry of petals. The pair of thieves watching the arrow hit the ground before an eye forms with a loud, blood-curdling scream before erupting in a massive pillar of flame.

The next moment both are running, not wanting to be anywhere near someone throwing around damage like that at a distance if they can help it.

They get about halfway home before they pull to a stop, Emerald panting heavily after the long sprint.

"So, I guess we know who bought the information on the 'Green Petal Thief' from Mr. Everything. She was scary. Time to go to Vale before she gets the chance to find us and tries to take her revenge?" Ruby asks as if talking about something far more mundane.

"Yeah, that sounds like a good idea." Emerald replies before standing up and pulling Ruby into a tight hug.
"E-Em? What's up?" Ruby asks blushing a bit as she returns the sudden display of affection.

"I just wanted to wish you a happy birthday. And I got you something." Emerald mentions before pulling out her pilfered prize. Placing the promise ring onto the ring finger of ruby's left hand.

"We're waaaay too young to even think about marriage. But that's why it's just a promise ring. And it's a constant reminder of this promise. That I will always love you Ruby Rose. And I will always want to be right here with you. No matter what we end up doing." Emerald proclaims, hugging her girlfriend again as Ruby stares at the ring in wide-eyed amazement before turning a teary eyed smile on Emerald and tackling her to the ground.

There is nothing the older thief can do to resist the lupine girl's showering of affection consisting of a random combination of nuzzling, passionate kissing, and verbal gushing. But why in Oums name would she ever want to?
Back in Business

Beta Read by: Crescent Sunrise

~Present Day~

Bright silver eyes open and flick around for a moment before squeezing closed and burrowing into the soft warm person shaped pillow next to them. Refusing to actually wake up and face the sun streaming in between drawn curtains.

"You know that isn't going to work. I've been awake for an hour now waiting for you to wake up so we can get started. We having a meeting today after all. Mr. Everything didn't go to the trouble to help us get started here so we could screw it up you know?" The pillow comments in a bland tone before deft fingers run gently through the girl's hair, scratching at the base of her ears making the lazy girl produce little happy snarls and growls. Her tail wrapping around her talking, petting pillow.

"Don't wanna, to comfy, can't make me." Ruby challenges as her girlfriend chuckles before starting to shift and slide under their blanketing, pulling herself slowly from the bed despite the little wolf girl clinging to her waist, protesting with piteous whines.

"We need to eat something, do you want to make breakfast today or should I?" Emerald asks. Their new home in Vale is quite novel for them. Unlike the old office area of an unused industrial building their new residence was signed for under an alias belonging to their former fence. Everything is clean, electricity and running water. An actual kitchen with oven, dish washer, and refrigerator. A washing machine and dryer to wash their clothing and a real bed to sleep in. All the little everyday things people take for granted.

"No, you made it yesterday It's my turn." Ruby replies while finally giving up her resistance and pulls herself from the bed before stretching out and giving a small yawn. The top portion of her pajamas riding up with her shoulders to expose her stomach.

"Okay, but go easy on the bacon and don't eat it out of the pan!" Emerald adds, heading into their bathroom for a shower. The one convenience the two have enjoyed abusing the most since arriving. It felt good to look down while washing and not seeing murky brown water moving from your body to the drain.

Ruby rolls her eyes as her mouth moves to childishly mock the last few words of Emerald's sentence and ending her entirely mature response by sticking out her tongue like any true lady would.

When Emerald emerges from her quick shower she's greeted by an eager wolf girl moving scrambled eggs onto plates followed by strips of bacon and toast. Noting that Ruby gave herself two fewer strips Emerald shakes her head. They were always fair with their food. As even portions as they could manage after a brief period where they had both tried to eat less so the other could have more. They had nearly starved themselves that time. Ruby giving herself two fewer strips only meant that two had been lost to 'sampling' when the smell had tempted Ruby too much to resist.

Emerald sits across from Ruby at the small table as the shorter girl sets down glasses of clear water. Clear and cold water from a faucet? How many people take something like that for granted just because they'd always had it? For the two urchins though everything about the apartment was novel. Even in the bare mostly empty space it was still a lot more than they had before.

But it was 'the' apartment. That was an important distinction if ever there was one to be made. 'The'
not 'their', neither Emerald nor Ruby saw the space as being 'theirs' because they hadn't chosen it. It was provided by a friend. Sure they make the payments themselves but their names were not on the lease, it was his alias. It would do for now.

Emerald uses the remote to turn on the TV. The only reason it was ever even used was for the morning news. As the pretty news caster flickers into place on the old set her voice fills the room.

"Last night yet another deserted cache of Dust was discovered in an abandoned warehouse near to the docks. As many of our viewers are aware, Vale has been the subject of a long string of Dust thefts for reasons that have yet come to light but two months ago the activities came to an abrupt end. Since then, hiddenstash of the stolen Dust have been located all over the city. With the return of the stolen goods Dust prices are once again dropping back to normal levels. A welcome relief to all hard working citizens. Also in the news, a bandit attack was thwarted on the roads just outside Vale, are people becoming a larger danger to travelers than Grimm? More tonight as the story develops. I'm Lisa Lavender, and this has been the 'morning minute'." She finishes before Emerald cuts the screen off again grabbing their dishes and moving to the sink to clean them.

"I wonder what they wanted that much Dust for. It's not exactly a big ticket item on its own, even in that kind of quantity. Maybe it was a corporate scam to try and force the Dust prices higher for a while?" Ruby wonders with a frown.

"I don't know, it is a weird thing to steal, I suppose. Maybe it was the White Fang trying to build up for something big? You remember what they were like back in Vacuo." Emerald replies getting a shudder from the little wolf girl.

After some of its members saw Ruby out on the street before they could afford nicer clothing, they approached her. All smiles and helping hands offering her a place with them. A tempting offer really. Food, water, shelter, clean clothes, and a warm bed. And all they seemed to want was for her to join them at a few Faunus rights rallies, help make signs and banners, and run a few messages and small packages around? It was a sweet deal.

But she wanted the same for Emerald too. At first they had seemed all too willing to bring Emerald in as well. It wasn't until Ruby brought her around that the warm smiles died and were replaced with suspicious looks and in some cases, outright glaring and accusations. As much as the Faunus of the White Fang back then talked about wanting equality and coexistence, the shadows of what they would become were evident.

They didn't take it well when Ruby got angry and accused them of being as racist as the humans they protested.

After that they scorned Ruby's presence for a time. When they started becoming more militant they tried again with careful smiles and honeyed words but were once again rebuffed after turning away Emerald. They never tried to hurt the little wolf girl and continued to be kind when she was alone, but more than once, had they tried to turn her against the older thief.

"Yeah, but usually when they get involved they're all about taking credit for it. Also why Vale? Vacuo and Atlas are way worse about treating the Faunus unfairly and the SDC is based out of Atlas. Hitting Vale just doesn't make sense for them. I'm totally convinced it's a corporate scheme." Ruby finishes with a decisive nod getting a wry grin from her girlfriend as the older thief gathers the plates.

"Yeah okay. It does make a kind of sense. I'll wash up, you get a shower, then we're leaving." Emerald declares slipping the last bit of her toast into her mouth before standing up and gathering the dishes while Ruby heads for the shower, tail waving above scandalous boy shorts and a tight black
top drawing Emeralds eye with distraction until she's out of the room.

Two hours later, Ruby and Emerald are standing across the street from a club owned by an information broker named Junior. A group of suited men move around the entrance carting out shattered glass and broken furniture to a mobile dumpster before emptying the bins and going back inside for more. Ruby watches as Emerald crosses the road and chats with the working men before returning to her side.

"Junior's inside but isn't seeing anyone. Apparently he's cancelled all his meetings for today after his club got trashed last night by 'some crazy blonde chick.'" Emerald explains and the pair pause a moment, both staring at the club with pondering looks before Ruby gets a little grin.

"Well, he certainly didn't inform us our meeting was cancelled. And we do have a bit of a reputation. It should be expected we show up when it suits us. Do you still have the number Everything gave us?" Ruby asks heading down the street bouncing with energy.

"Yes I do and… Oh look, no cancellation message. I guess he didn't clear up all his meetings after all." Emerald replies with a small smile as she follows the younger girl. Her eyes darting around to take in the people on the street with practiced ease while they cross the street and head into a small alley.

Getting to the roof of the club wasn't difficult. A fire escape to get onto a roof nearby followed by using Linked Avarice to scale made the trip quick. Neither was moving around after getting inside the roof access. The upper sections mostly cleared out while they worked to fix up the building. Finding Junior's office was equally easy as it was the only room around with a guard outside.

Getting rid of him didn't take too much effort from Emerald as the older thief uses her Semblance to approach and convince the man she'll take over for him so he can take a break before helping out below. Leaving Ruby to hide until the guard is out of sight before rejoining the older girl.

"So what do we do Em?"

"Easy Ru, we're just a pair of cute girls paid to bring a message for his ears only so he'll get the twins Mr. Everything mentioned to us to leave. Then we get down to business." Emerald replies getting a nod from her girlfriend before the pair open the door and head inside.

Immediately an irritated sigh goes out from the broker sitting behind the desk, not even looking up from his work. "Honestly can you idiots not understand the words leaving my lips? I said I didn't want to be disturbed for anything. Now go away." He finished before finally turning his head to look at the two and narrowing his eyes as the twins bristle behind him. "You're not my men." He states with a growl in his voice as he stands up his hands set on the desk in front of him as he glares at the two nervous young girls in his office.

"S-sorry sir, w-we were just paid to bring you a message. For your ears only. Oh, and to g-give you this." Ruby stutters out shuffling forward looking frightened as she passes a card along the table before hurrying back to Emeralds side. She glances between the twins and Junior, watching as he looks at the card and waves the twins out of the room where Emerald and Ruby suddenly relax looking at each other with mirth in their eyes before grinning at Junior.

"Well that wasn't so hard Em. I hope all the jobs we take here won't be as easy as this was. We'll get rusty." The shorter girl comments as she leans into the taller one.

"Don't worry Ruby, I'm sure he's just having an off day, right Junior?" Emerald asks looking to the large and confused man with a wide grin. It only gets wider as his brow twitches and he stands up
slamming his hands on his desk.

"What the hell are you two talking about? Give me your message and get the hell out of my club!"
He shouts his hand inching towards a bat leaning against his desk.

"Whoa there, calm down. We aren't really messengers, we just don't like people knowing who we really are. Mr Everything set up our meeting for today right? We're 'The Green Petal Thief'. The two of us together. So just settle down right? Jeez, all that anger can't be good for your blood pressure."
Emerald comments getting a snicker from Ruby.

"What are you talking about? Everyone knows the petal thief is a solo act, a man, and likely in his thirties. So either give me the message or get out and stop wasting my damn time." Junior replies sitting down again, ignoring the frowns on the two girls as they look him over.

Ruby perches on the back of one of the guest chairs letting Emerald talk for them as usual while she looks around the office curiously.

"Look Junior it's really simple. You have a connection set up to the CCT right? Something underground? We make a call and you get all the confirmation you need then we can talk business. If you decide we're still wasting your time we'll even pay you for it before we hit the road." The mint haired thief offers and it seems to mollify the man as he relaxes in his chair before shrugging and pressing a button letting a screen fold up from his desk that he turns to face the girl.

"You get one call. I do not have the patience for being lead around today." He declares watching the older girl as she walks over and opens her Scroll, plugging it into a terminal on the desk before hitting a button on it to make a call. It rings a few times before a voice can be heard on the other side. The screen lighting up with a blank male portrait with a question mark over the face.

"Who is it? I'm telling you now that if it isn't good you'll owe me six hundred lien. Two hundred for the Scroll I now have to toss, two hundred for waking me up, and another two hundred because I don't like you." Mr Everything's voice comes across as drowsy. It's likely he really was asleep but he does that all the time.

"Heya Everything!" Ruby's voice chirps up and there's a sudden rustling on the other end of the line as the screen cuts off for a second before showing a dirty blonde head with a lazy grin.

"Hello Ruby, it's good to see you and Emerald are looking okay in Vale. That'll be four hundred Lien you know." He replies with good humor getting a shrug from the smaller girl as Emerald frowns.

"We'll give you two. We only had to make the call because the guy you set us up with over here didn't believe us." Emerald mentions before turning the screen around to face Junior.

"Whaaa? Junior? I told you they would be coming around today didn't I? We set this meeting up over a week ago, did you forget? I mean, I know you had that problem at your club last night but business is business my friend." Everything comments getting a frown from Junior.

"So many things are wrong with that Everything. You told me he would be by today. The implication being that 'The Green Petal Thief' is both male and singular! How was I supposed to know these two little girls would be the thief?!!" He counters, running his hand down his face in irritation as Ruby frowns and huffs at the little comment.

"I also said not to worry about the details and that he would give you a calling card to ID himself didn't I? They did give you a calling card didn't they?" He asks looking to the edge of the screen as if
trying to see the other two in the room.

"We did, in any case, are you satisfied now Junior? I'm sure Everything would like to get back to his nap now." The red eyed thief comments waving good bye to the broker on the other side of the call before ending it after getting a nod from Junior.

"Congratulations Junior. You are now one of four people in all of Remnant who know that 'The Green Petal Thief' is not only not a man, but is also two people. Half of those people are me and Ruby and the last we just ended a call with." Emerald mentions with a wide smile.

"Eeeeeem, can we hurry up? I wanna look around the city some more." Ruby whines rocking back and forth on the back of the chair as Emerald gives her a deadpan look before turning back to Junior with her brow raised.

"Yeah, yeah, alright." He replies tossing her his Scroll. "Put your number in there under the initials GP while I write down my number for the two of you. I'll swap Scrolls once every two weeks, you'll get a message with the new number just before the old one goes inactive. I'll call you when something big comes up I think you might be interested in. Otherwise you can show up here anytime to have a look at what Mr. Everything has passed along. I'll let the guys know you're messengers and to leave you alone. They won't give you any trouble." He finishes, ripping off a piece of paper and passing it over as he gets his Scroll back.

"Alright, and when we have something to sell on the side?" Emerald asks, looking at the number before passing it to Ruby who starts putting into her Scroll first then Emerald's.

"I don't do stolen goods here. Vale doesn't have a centralized Black Market like Vacuo. Cops here are more on the level, but also lazy. They tend to pass on as much as they can get away with to the Huntsmen. Which as you can imagine can cause all kinds of additional problems." Junior admits, shrugging as the two grimace. They're not sure what Huntsmen are like here but back in Vacuo, a Huntsmen showing up on the street they're working meant making themselves scarce. Any jobs with a Huntsmen around meant the pay was going up or the job was passed over. If they're more wide spread here then it could mean bad news for the two young thieves.

Ruby speaks next after shaking her head. No use worrying about it now. The decision is made and the two of them were here to stay. "So if we can't sell to you, who do you suggest?" Ruby asks with a small smile on her face. Junior doesn't seem as business savvy as Mr. Everything. He could be charging them for all of this information but still, for a criminal he doesn't seem so bad. Contenting himself with setting up work for others, running his bar, and selling information.

Junior gets a thoughtful look on his face as he leans back rubbing his chin. "Well I would suggest Tukson over at 'Tukson's Book Trade'. He runs a fair operation out of the back of his shop but he's got some worries lately. You feel like helping him out with that and he might pay you for it. Hell, just the fact you two are working together will put you on his good side. He's big on Human-Faunus relations. There are a couple of others but they aren't as careful or clean as he is. Want them anyway?" He asks and the two look at each other for a long moment Before Emerald turns back to him.

"Sure, give us the names and addresses, we'll check with Tukson first though. If it's something we can help with we might as well. Besides, you said he runs a book store?" Emerald mentions trying to sound casual as Ruby covers her mouth with both hands to muffle her giggles.

"Yeah alright, alright, I should have something lined up for you two soon." He mentions writing down the names of three fences in Vale, including Tukson, and addresses for them handing the new sheet over before leaning back in his chair and groaning as his hand trails down his face. "Send the
twins back in on your way out. I got some work for them."

As far as dismissals go they've gotten worse and Ruby shrugs as she hops off the chair falling in beside Emerald as she hugs the older girls arm on their way out as if scared once more. They leave with no trouble at all, dropping off Junior's message on the way out.

"So, exploration or Tukson?" Emerald asks and Ruby looks at the address.

"Well I don't know where this is, so I guess Tukson counts as both unless you know where this is?" She asks offering Emerald the paper. The mint haired girl looks and frowns before shaking her head.

"Well then. Decision made, let's go say hi to our maybe new best friend!" Ruby says with exuberance, giving a little cheer before taking Emeralds hand in her own smaller one, their fingers immediately moving to link together even as Emerald lets out a put up sigh as if bothered by the arrangement. Her small smile giving her away faster than Ruby using her Semblance.
Ruby and Emerald spent three hours building a mental map of the streets and alleyways before finally giving up on locating the street via wandering. The next hour was used up just asking people for directions. Of course if Emerald was asking directions, Ruby was borrowing wallets or vice versa. It was a kind older man that told Emerald exactly where to go when Ruby passed on collecting his money.

"Okay Ruby, why did the old guy get a pass?" Emerald asks as they head down the street, happy they are at least getting much closer to the bookstore and can finally take a break to get food before heading back to the apartment.

"Lots of reasons. First he was really really nice to us. Didn't stare at your boobs, butt, or my ears. Then he gave us really good directions. Also, did you see his shop? It was completely wrecked. He'll need the money to fix it up. And it's a Dust shop! I might want to shop there myself and you know the rule, 'we don't steal where we shop.' Besides, we have plenty enough pocket money now." Ruby lists off before smiling up at her girlfriend and shrugging.

Emerald looks at the younger, chipper wolf girl with a wry smile before wrapping an arm around Ruby's waist. "Alright, so how do you want to handle Tukson? Should we mess with him a little at first like we did with Junior?" Emerald asks.

"Hmm, well he is a fence but I doubt we'll be able to call Mr. Everything from his store and I don't want to poke Junior too much so soon. He's in a bad mood after all. I think we should just play it by ear." Ruby suggests, getting a shrug and nod from Emerald.

It's only ten minutes later that they stand outside of 'Tukson's Book Trade'. With Emerald trying not to look too interested at the selection while eyeing the slogan underneath 'Home to Every Book Under the Sun!' They look inside and don't see anyone and look at each other before shrugging and heading inside. The door hitting a bell as it swings open. It's a quaint little shop with low lighting in the back while the windows in the front let sunlight from outside stream in. Controls next to the door allowing the owner to control how much light gets in by adjusting how translucent the glass is.

"It's kind of dark isn't it?" Emerald asks as she roams around the store letting Ruby approach the front alone.

"I dunno, I kinda like it. Feels like a den animals might make in the woods. Did Junior mention if he was a Faunus?" Ruby asks as she looks around until her eyes fall on a bell on the counter.

"Nope, just that he supports Human-Faunus coexistence. Maybe that has something to do with his recent troubles?" Emerald replies as she looks through a few titles. When she doesn't get a response the older thief turns around to see the shorter girl staring towards the back room. Her hood down and ears swivelling to listen better. "Ruby?" she questions in a low tone, only to quiet herself as Ruby brings a finger to her lips before pointing to the back door.

"Mr. Tukson's got company back there and from the sound of it, he doesn't seem to like it. They aren't fighting physically just… quietly yelling at each other. Like the butcher's wife used to do back in Vacuo when he said something embarrassing. Only this sounds less disapproving and more... threatening." Ruby mentions leaning slightly on the counter her eyes closed as she strains to hear more before shaking her head.
Her hand lifts and taps the bell a few times making it ring throughout the shop. A deep male voice calls out from the back letting them know he'll be right with them. The door to the back opens letting two large men out of the back room, the one laden with books presumed to be Mr. Tukson as he approaches the counter setting down the piles of books while the other heads for the door pausing to look back over his shoulder. "This isn't over, Tukson. He'll be very disappointed you've failed to see reason." He says before leaving the building.

Tukson rolls his eyes at the threat before looking at the two young girls standing in front of his counter. A human girl with mint green hair and red eyes standing with an arm around the shoulder of a cheerful young Wolf Faunus judging by the ears on her head and tail wagging behind her. This is what he wanted to see more of in the world, and why he joined the White Fang to begin with. The sight of the two brings a wide smile to his face.

"Hello ladies, what can I do for you today?" He asks, his hands set on the counter. Both girls open their mouths to speak before turning to each other with amused looks. He watches as they seem to have a silent conversation that ends with the green haired girl turning to him.

"Do you have a book ordering service here? I mean, it's a nice slogan but obviously you can't possibly have a copy of every book on Remnant here." She says, pouting at the younger girl when she snorts in amusement. The cuddling hug she gets in addition to it seems to take the edge off her irritability though.

"I do, though you'll have to understand that rarer books will take longer to get my hands on in addition to being a bit more pricey. Unfortunately, I'm not taking any orders at the moment. There's some question as to how much longer I'll be able to remain in business here." He explains, getting a nod in return before the shorter girl speaks up.

"You're Tukson, right, the owner?" Ruby asks getting a nod before she smiles innocently at him. "Are you a Faunus? Sorry if that's rude, it's just that you keep this back area pretty dark but don't seem to strain your eyes at all. But at the same time I don't see any of the traits like my ears and tail."

Tukson chuckles at that before nodding and lifting a hand. "Yes, I'm a Faunus, here." He says before his nails curve and elongate turning into vicious looking claws before retracting once more, leaving Ruby slack jawed.

"You have claws?! That's so unfair! I want my hands to turn into claws too!" She says looking at her fingers like she's trying to will the nails to become claws before pouting when nothing happens. Only to then pout more when both her girlfriend and the Fence start chuckling at her expense.

"You don't need claws Ru, you're fierce enough just as you are." Emerald comments, hugging Ruby just a bit closer to herself before turning to Tukson.

"So Mr. Tuckson, you mentioned having some kind of trouble. Was it something to do with that guy who just left?" Emerald questions as Ruby breaks off to look around the store herself, letting Emerald once more deal with the more business side of their work.

"Oh, don't worry about that, I just made a mistake a few years ago and signed up with the wrong group. Used to be decent people, but not anymore." He replies trying to wave off Emerald's concern for him with a smile.

"You're talking about the White Fang right?" The older thief questions before motioning towards Ruby, the shorter girl's ears swivelling to pay attention to the conversation as she looks through the racks. "Me and Ruby were living on the streets for awhile. We watched the change from the outside as they tried to bring Ruby into the organization." She relates before smiling fondly at the smaller
girl. "She turned them down every time though because they wouldn't take me too."

Tuksen looks visibly touched by the story as he looks between the girls. "Well... okay, yes, my problems are with the White Fang. Once they turned more militant they started asking me to take risks with my store. Risks I wasn't willing to do when they were changing so much from what we were supposed to be. I left, and for awhile everything was fine. Then more recently they showed back up and haven't left me alone since." He admits with a sigh. "Fighting them won't get me anywhere. It will be easier to just pack up and move."

Ruby smiles, coming to the counter with a weapons manual setting it on the counter for purchase, speaking up as he turns to ring her up. "Do you have any ideas how to handle them if you wanted to stay? We might know a guy who can help."

He chuckles and shakes his head lightly as the total comes up on the register. He takes the money she hands him. "Know a Huntsmen do you? Look, I appreciate the thought girls, but a hunter goes after them in the city and it's a short list of who could be responsible, and my name is at the top." He replies, offering her a receipt as she turns the book around to face him tapping the cover.

"Have you any interest in weapons Mr. Tuksen? I love'em, built mine and Emerald's. You should have a look." She adds, eyes moving between him and the book. Her girlfriend rolling her eyes at the dramatic theatrics.

Tuksen looks at the book with narrowed eyes before opening the cover to see a calling card staring back at him. His eyes go wide at the image of the bright green gem over red rose petals. "You two know the-" he starts before the older girl's hand extends across the counter with a wide smile on her lips.

"Hello Mr. Tuksen let us reintroduce ourselves. I'm Emerald Sustrai and my girlfriend here is Ruby Rose. We want to help you." She says, watching him shake her hand while holding the card in the other. The moment it clicks for him he looks between them with wide eyes.

"You two are the-" He starts.

"Yep!" Ruby interrupts, her tail wagging behind her while her eyes twinkle with amusement.

"But I thought it was a-" He tries again.

"Nope." Emerald interjects with a wry smirk on her lips. If he's bothered by the interruptions he's not showing it.

"But you two look so-"

"Young? Well, we grew up rough. Trust us, we're good at what we do." Ruby says oozing confidence as she grabs her new book from the counter.

This time it's his turn to smirk as he meets her eyes. "I was going to say small." He retorts, chuckling when the two respond with indignant cries. He shakes his head looking from the card and back at the girls for a long moment before sharp eyes trail to the weapons holstered at the small of their backs. "You two sure you want to help me?" He asks giving them a shrewd look.

"Sure do!" Ruby responds pressing subtly into Emerald's side again.

"And why is that?" He inquires, noting how close the two are. The small touches and short looks are all he needs to know the two aren't acting. In his experience, you can't fake that kind of easy affection.
"A few reasons really. First, we need a fence. Second, you're the first recommendation Junior gave us. And third, you're not a scumbag." Emerald replies with a smile.

"And how do you know I'm not a scumbag?"

"Oh, that one's easy. First, you own a bookstore." Emerald mentions holding up a finger smirking as that gets a chuckle from the fence. "Second, You've been nothing but polite since we came in. And lastly, you're not staring at me. Ruby get's a little territorial." She mentions, her smirk turning into a wide grin when the shorter girl hugs her around the waist completely unashamed of the fact.

"All perfectly understandable reasons." He says before nodding. "Alright, black out the windows, lock the door, and come on into the back. I'm more comfortable discussing the other side of my business there." He explains before heading into the back himself.

Upon following him the two girls are hit with the musty smell of printed paper, something Emerald enjoys immensely and Ruby has grown to appreciate, even if Emerald's love for the written word is one of the few things the two don't share. Books line walls of shelving in a small maze through the back room before ending at a door that is open, waiting for them to enter. Inside, the books have vanished for the most part. Only a few first editions are on display, along with guns, explosives, jewels and gems. All tucked away safely behind shatterproof glass, making them a pain to get at without a key. Probably rigged to an alarm as well. They could steal it, but, it would take them awhile. Sometimes simplicity can be the best security.

Tukson sits in a chair behind a coffee table instead of a desk as they had come to expect, leading to a very informal feel as they sit across from him. Watching as he slowly turns their calling card over in his hands before sliding it back to them across the table.

"So you two want to help me so I'll be free to buy your procured items and clean your lien?" He asks, his elbows resting on his knees as he leans forward to watch the two young girls.

"Junior didn't mention that you launder as well. What's the cover?" Emerald asks in reply, they had a small package delivery company registered under an alias set up for them, ironically named 'R&E package retrieval co.' so money laundered for them would appear to be legitimate. As the service being provided on paper was in labor and not goods it would be hard to prove the company is a shell.

"Book refurbishing, you know, people bring in books that are damaged and I fix'em up like new. I actually do provide that but it's not as common as my tax papers would have you believe." He replies with a wink.

"Hmmm… We'll see how Junior does washing them through his club first if you don't mind." The mint haired girl replies. "Right now, we just need a fence. So, what can we do to help you? Please remember we're thieves, not muggers. We'll steal, lie, and cheat but we don't break bones or cut people up unless we absolutely have to. We also don't trash people's homes." She adds getting an odd look on the last one. It's Ruby who explains for them.

"We've never had a home for ourselves. We started in an orphanage after all, and left it for the streets back in Vacuo. Back there, home for us was the office part of an empty building in the industrial park. We don't want to destroy someone's home, a place like that should be treated with some respect." Ruby explains with a small warm smile a hint of fang unintentionally exposed.

"Fair enough, I don't want the White Fang hurt either. Do that and they'll lick their wounds for a little while before retaliating. I just want them to have bigger concerns in Vale than me. It will give me the chance to work out something with Adam so we can part on more even terms." Tukson explains
before leaning back again. "Right now, they're quiet and the police are more worried about the Dust robberies than the White Fang. Though, that might change on it's own soon. Don't know what Torchwick is up to lately, stealing all that Dust and just leaving it to be found later. His partner should be happy though. Small quiet sort, never heard her speak a word the few times she's come with him to the shop. Don't think she would enjoy drawing that kind of attention." He comments before shaking his head.

"Sorry, got a bit off topic. The point is that if the next one of those stashes being found happens to have a few White Fang masks left behind in a hurry for the cops to find, it should put enough heat on them to make them more amiable to a peaceful resolution with me. Better to have a Faunus willing to work with you, if not for you, outright when the cops are breathing down your neck." Tuksan spells out as he sets down a small map of the city on the coffee table before unrolling it for them.

"This sounds easy, way too easy. If it were this simple anyone could do it, even you." Emerald comments looking at him suspiciously.

"I never said it would be simple, you see, I don't have any of those masks on hand here. And since I've been distancing myself I have no idea where the White Fang are camping out these days. Luckily, it's not too difficult to find out where they're recruiting rallies are. I can point you in that direction when I find out, I would do it myself, but, they would recognize me in a heartbeat. Recruits have a two day window after attending the rally to either walk away or join up." He explains, hesitating a moment before moving past it to offer his idea for a plan.

"I suggest Miss Rose goes to a rally, I'll get my hands on a recruit mask for her, while you, Miss Sustrai, follow. After they break up you follow the full members to a base and secure a few full-member masks. The more customized the better. Once you have the masks, I'll give you a stash and you can plant them. Then some good natured citizen just needs to report suspicious activity there and we should be fine." He finishes, holding up his hand to stop any protest from the older girl. "It's just something I came up with on the spot. If you come up with something better then I'm all for it, but this made the most sense to me. The important part is getting the member masks. The 'how' is up to you." He adds before pulling a card from his pocket.

"Here's a card with the number for the shop. It also has my Scroll on the back. Call tomorrow evening and I'll give you the location, date, and time. I'm confident you two can do this since you've got a reputation for getting things no thief should be able to snag and getting away clean, even when you do trip alarms. You call, I'll know we're good. You don't, and I'll start moving forward on my plan to get out of town again. I hope you call honestly, I think I'd rather enjoy working with the two of you." He admits as they take the card, Ruby grinning and Emerald seemingly mollified. They always did manage jobs better on their own and his plan does seem like a solid foundation. She can't imagine a reason not to get this done except for one thing.

"If we do this and help you out. We will need some kind of payment. Having you as a fence would be preferable to us, but as you said, we have a reputation." Emerald explains and at least her partner has the decency to look sheepish at it when Tuksan's eyes narrow.

"How much are you asking for? I don't have a lot on hand, I tend to move money through bank transfers rather than large lump sums. Less suspicious that way. And if it's as expensive as your reputation suggests, then leaving might actually be better for me." He counters blinking as the red eyed girl grins, trying her best not to look too eager.

"No, no, not money. Not this time anyway. I want a book, rather rare actually. Haven't been able to find it anywhere and I've been looking. It's called 'Third Crusade'. You promise to get that book in my hands and we have a deal." She offers as Ruby snorts in amusement next to her.
"I get the feeling there's a story here I'm missing." The store owner comments looking at the shorter girl for an explanation. One she seems more than happy to provide.

"We used to pick pockets to get by before we started doing B and E for Mr. Everything. At first it was just Em doing it, and one day, she almost got caught and had to ditch her bag to get away. The book was in that bag and she hasn't been able to find it anywhere else since then. It's her White Beowolf." Ruby comments with a grin at the flustered look she gets from the older girl.

White Beowolf, of course, referring to the story of the Huntsmen 'Ahad' and his obsessive quest to find and kill a gigantic white Beowolf he named 'Soby Dirk.' The story is a famous classic literature. Teaching a lesson about being consumed by dangerous obsession and is referenced commonly by the public when commenting on someone's obsessive pursuit.

"I see… I think I might be able to find you a copy. Rare books are a specialty of mine after all. I've got my own reputation to think of." He replies, offering his hand for the two girls to shake.

"Done deal then. Ruby, come on, we've got to grab some groceries on the way home." She says while standing. Her eyes moving to a few of the first editions on display wondering how much they would cost for her to get for her own growing collection.

Her first editions of course being carefully preserved, but still read. Books are meant to be read after all. A book never opened is a book that never got to share the story on it's pages. Anyone keeping something like that doesn't deserve to own them. Tukson is different though. He's displaying them to sell, spreading the story to others. Just about the only excuse Emerald can accept for the sight.

They left after removing the tint from the windows and unlocking the door. Ruby's weapon manual in hand and tail wagging happily behind her as they make their way back towards their apartment before realizing that once again, they have no idea how to get there from where they are.

Emerald adds buying a map to their tasks. Right under getting their groceries.

Honestly, while someone might be bothered about getting lost for the two girls it's really a minor inconvenience considering neither really have a place to be that evening. Instead the two spend most of the time joking with each other and wandering aimlessly. When they came across maps at bus stations they got themselves pointed in the right direction and continued wandering.

By the time they made it back to the apartment Emerald smiles, watching Ruby plop herself on the couch as she goes to put away their groceries and start dinner but makes sure to turn on the news first. News is important in their line of work.

"-we have here with us a special guest Huntsmen and Signal Academy teacher, Qrow Branwen. This morning we brought you breaking news about a thwarted bandit attack on the roads outside of Vale. While we were unable to contact the victim, who has decided to remain anonymous for her own protection, we were able to get hold of her rescuer. Mr. Branwen, is this manner of incident becoming more commonplace?" The beautiful Lisa Lavender asks the charismatic drunk on screen, who's eyes open wide as if realizing he's on a live feed and slowly lowers his flask. Gulping slowly before smiling with an overabundance of charm.

"Well, there's no need for worry really. This was an isolated incident. The bandits were a team of two, targeting a girl I was to meet up with. She managed to hold out long enough for me to arrive, and thankfully, rescue her. Make no mistake lady, this wasn't some random mugging out on the road." He says, managing to lighten the serious tone of the story with his half drunk demeanor.

"Well, I'm certainly glad to know that rumors in this case seem to have been mistaken and that such a
tragedy was able to be averted. Can you tell us anything about the fate of the two bandits?" She asks the dark haired man leaning back lazily in his chair.

"Unfortunately I'm not at liberty to say. As the attack happened outside of the city it is technically outside the jurisdiction. I'm not privy to the methods for handling criminals like that. But I'm sure they'll have a nice time behind bars while it's all sorted out." He responds, the young two thieves glance at each other when they notice his evasive answer. A strange thing that he isn't able to speak about the matter.

The news is turned off after the interview devolves into shameless drunken flirting on the side of the guest, leaving the two partners to enjoy their meal in peace. Sharing looks and smiles as they eat before setting down their plates on the coffee table, the smaller wolf girl stretching out on the sofa. Using her cloak like a blanket as her head settles in Emerald's lap the mint haired girl smiling as she grabs a book from the table and opens it, using one hand to read as the other settles between Ruby's ears to gently scratch behind twitching faunus ears.

As the evening wears on Ruby twitches letting out little yips and snarls, the adorable sounds telling the older girl that Ruby has fallen asleep. A soft smile spreads over Emerald's face as she gently closes her book and moves some of the hair from Ruby's face. Memories from their time at the orphanage resurface so clearly for the red eyed girl it is like living them all over again.

~Ten Years ago~

Emerald was not happy. Up until now she had a room to herself, and being assigned a roommate complicated everything. She had to hide all of her escape preparations extra carefully, and even sleeping is more difficult with another body breathing in the room with her. Possibly the worst part of it was that the little Faunus girl was just so... happy! All the time! Did she not realize that ending up in this place meant it was the end of the line? In the time Emerald has been in the orphanage, only two kids had ever been adopted and they had both been exceptionally young. For kids like Ruby and Emerald, there was no hope but what they made for themselves.

The older girl gets up and glares over at the bed against the opposite wall where the small wolf girl lay, curled in her cloak. The thin blanket not doing much to keep the colder night air out. She would learn to pad the blanketing soon enough. Or Emerald would have to teach her because the chattering was driving her up a wall. The soft whining and whimpering was not helping either.

With a sigh Emerald pushes herself up grabbing her own blanket pulling it with her to the smaller girl's bed. She glares at Ruby's shivering form before giving a soft sigh, adding her own blanket to the girls' before lifting both and slipping in behind the curled up girl who seems to immediately burrow into the additional warmth introduced to her bed. Soon the whimpering fades, replaced by little yips and snarls that make Emerald struggle not to chuckle as she relaxes and lets herself slip into sleep.

~Present Day~

Emerald was very happy. Her temperament far from the bitter, disillusioned girl she was becoming before Ruby stepped into her life. She had no idea how she might have ended up without her partner, and honestly, she was afraid of what might have been. She owed far more than she could say to her little girlfriend, no matter what Ruby said about it.

Leaning down she plants a soft kiss on Ruby's forehead before shifting to leave Ruby on the couch while she moves the dishes to the sink. They would be fine until the morning. As would their planning for their job helping Tukson. For now, Ruby would sleep and Emerald was eager to join her. Gently lifting the small girl into her arms, she carries her partner to the bedroom, getting her
situated under the covers before joining her. A happy grin breaking over Emerald's face as Ruby curls into her once more, just as she did that first night, and every night since.
The next morning was spent lounging in a lazy exchange of ideas. Much as they may like Tukson, neither really enjoyed the idea of Ruby actually attending a meeting with those fanatics as a potential member. The risk was too high that something unexpected could happen, especially when considering Ruby's short stature. It would be too easy for one of them to mistake her for a younger child and try to 'rescue' her.

"So what do we have so far? We know they'll have Faunus watching for outsiders loitering around nearby, so the closest you can get is with binoculars, Em. They make you and you might not be able to get away and I won't be able to help you out without blowing everything." Ruby states, frowning at the table between them.

"Well until we get the details from Tukson, we have this map." She comments waving at the map laid out on the table between them. "And ideas that will likely get thrown out when we get the details. Much as I dislike them I can't say the White Fang are actually stupid. They've gotten too far for that to be possible. Cells in every major city, bases in the wilds that move around to avoid the Grimm. Organized attacks on several major companies." She lists off with her fingers before shaking her head. "I don't like it Ruby. I know we're doing this job but I don't want you near them if we can come up with something better."

"I'm not sure we can, Em. Yeah we have our Semblances but I still get tired if I run too far and I can't keep up with a Bullhead for too long. If they're basing out somewhere far off we won't be able to find out their main base to get the goods. I may have to go in so I can plant a tracker on someone." Ruby counters and much to Emerald's displeasure, it's a solid point. They can't get too close or risk being spotted by the Fang's lookouts. Nor do they have any guarantee of being able to follow the Fang after the rally is concluded. Upsetting as it is, Tukson's plan is looking more and more likely.

Emerald sighs, her hands undoing and redoing the end of a braid to give herself something to do. Their options here were very limited dealing with Faunus normally isn't much more difficult than dealing with Humans. But these aren't normal Faunus. They are members of an illegal organization meeting in secret. They would be jittery, high strung, and paranoid. A combination that would make infiltrating another way a very risky endeavor. And 'The Green Petal Thief' didn't become famous by taking foolish risks.

"We we can always turn the job down Ruby, I'm really not sure about taking a job with you at risk like this." She tries again getting an incredulous look from her girlfriend in response.

"Really? Em, you took all kinds of risks when we were just getting started. Not to mention all that we've done up until now. The most we'll be risking is someone trying to be to helpful, but I won't be dressed like we're living on the streets. Clean clothes, brushed tail, I'll just be one more young, delusional Faunus wanting to 'improve our society'." Ruby counters making a face as she says the last bit. As she pouts and leans back in her seat after Emerald frowns, realizing once more that Ruby isn't just her girlfriend or the little girl that she's taking care of.

The smaller girl is her partner in all things. And while the two do operate as a team, they were both quite skilled in their chosen craft. Ruby would certainly be able to handle herself and nothing could catch her if the job went sideways. Not taking the job because there was a small risk of Ruby coming across a well meaning Faunus in a crowd is hardly a cause for concern now that they are in their teens.
"I know, I know it doesn't make the most sense but it doesn't really need to, does it? I'm worried about you. I always worry about you." Emerald admits watching Ruby from her side of the table only to get a long look in return before blinking as Ruby vanishes in a flash of petals and the next thing she sees is a wolf girl mid pounce coming from her right, too fast to do anything about as she turns her back, hitting the cushions of the couch as the cloak clad girl hugs her tightly.

"I know you do. I worry about you too. But I've got this and you know it. Let's call Tukson and get everything set up okay? The sooner we start the sooner we can finish up and start selling some of our stash. We have a backlog growing and we have to dump it before it get's too hot." Ruby replies from her position over top her mint haired girlfriend.

Emerald stalls and sighs before finally giving in and reaching for her scroll which required far more effort with her girlfriend clinging to her like a limpet. Not that she particularly minded the contact but it wasn't the most practical position when trying to set up work.

The line rings a few times before the book traders gruff voice comes over the line with a simple and slightly impatient 'Hello?'

"Tukson? We're in, and we're going with your plan. We'll be by in a bit to pick up the info and the mask for Ruby." Emerald explains, getting a small grunt of acknowledgement before the line goes dead and she hangs it up turning her attention back to Ruby. "You know you can't bring the cloak on this job right? It's too noticeable." She comments running a hand across the warm fabric ignoring Ruby's pout.

"I'm suddenly having second thoughts about this job." The younger girl replies getting a chuckle from Emerald as she pulls her girlfriend in for a kiss.

"Going with Tukson's idea was your decision. Now you get to live with it, don't worry Ruby. I'll keep it safe for you." She says nuzzling into the pouting girl before flipping them over and starting to tickle Ruby into submission.

~One Week Later~

"Okay Ru, remember. Once you get in I'll be listening and watching from here. I've got eyes on a few silhouettes on the roof, but, even with the binoculars I'm having trouble making them out. Just be careful and tomorrow I'll do some baking." Emerald's voice reminds the little thief as she plucks at the simple loose clothing she's dressed in. At least she got to keep her boots, the pants, however, she wished she could do without, but it's fashionable and blends in well enough to go unnoticed.

She knows Emerald is trying to bribe her into being especially careful and she hadn't planned on getting herself caught out. Not that she would turn away Em's promise of baked goods. The older girl had been practicing ever since they moved in and got their own kitchen. Cooking with an oven instead of over a camping heater does, in fact, make a difference. While they have the money to eat out, neither were very comfortable spending the money to do so with any regularity, which means cooking for themselves. And baking naturally came with it. Nothing extravagant of course, but it was usually good.

Ruby shifts, straightening up her shirt so the buttons run in a line before getting out her mask and putting it on so it covers the upper half of her face as she approaches the entrance to the meeting. Hidden in an alley behind a closed down warehouse and guarded by armed members of the Fang. Their eyes scanning every approaching person to ensure they are Faunus before they can get near the entrance. As those eyes turn to her her ears perk on her head and her tail shifts side to side openly displaying her heritage for their perusal. The interest doesn't last long as they move on to the next approaching person, leaving her alone as she walks by and into the building.
Lighting is low inside which is just fine to a Faunus and Ruby's eyes adjust quickly, leaving her to look around at the crowd gathered in front of a sturdy stage built just for the rally. Common members not standing watch over the entrance or crowd are gathered before it, talking to each other and dressed in uniforms that mark them separate from the gathering group of newcomers on one side. Seeing so many of her fellow Faunus attending for the first time makes the young girl uneasy as she recalls her own previous experiences dealing with the fanatics. They have no idea what they're getting into and if they do well… Ruby's belief in people will have taken a hit.

The crowd is filled with the buzz of conversations going on all over as Ruby is relatively ignored, which thankfully, is exactly what they had hoped for. It lasts until the sparse lighting is dimmed further in the crowd while the stage is brightened causing the conversations to die off as a large Faunus with a customized full face mask steps into the light clearing his throat for attention.

"Brothers and sisters, thank you for joining us tonight! We have had some recent setbacks in Vale but this gathering has reassured me that we are far from finished here! For now we are gathering members in preparation for our next opportunity to really impact things here and all across Remnant for the betterment of the Faunus! The White Fang is as strong as we ever were and growing stronger by the day!" He states in a strong deep voice. Ruby has to admit the man had a talent for public speaking that belied his muscle bound frame. She watches as the crowd is quickly caught up with his words, cheering until he holds up his hands for silence.

"Fortunately before our arrangement fell through, one of our prior associates managed to get their hands on some experimental weaponry for our use and we have managed to secure a base outside of the kingdom that the Humans have abandoned. We aren't certain how much will be brought to us here but that is a decision for the higher ups. For now, the boycotts on anti-Faunus establishments has been growing in strength with word of mouth spreading to keep our brethren from patroning them alongside the few sympathetic Humans. Remember to be careful brothers and sisters, while a Human may seem friendly and helpful, they are not like us and will never truly understand our plight." He starts and Ruby rolls her eyes from behind the safety of her mask as she hears the small whisper of her partner scoffing over their comms.

"Aaaaaaand there it is. That same us and them attitude that keeps real equality from being more than a pipe dream. Not saying Humans aren't the same way, but, by Oum it's surprising they don't choke on all that hypocrisy." Em's voice mutters softly and Ruby has to momentarily struggle not to giggle. Fortunately she's saved from having to do so when the large man calls out, asking for all the new recruits to step forward. Here is the part that had Ruby and Emerald the most nervous. Even Tukson wasn't sure what this would lead to really, as recently, the joining process had been more streamlined to bulk their numbers. But now with their 'setbacks' they might have slowed down again returning to the method Tukson was familiar with. That's what they were hoping for at any rate.

As Ruby stepped forward among the crowd her trepidation grew until she noticed the new members were being handed a notebook to collect their information the large man began speaking again to explain. "You can sign your name and a number where we can send you the information for the next meeting. Once we see you've attended enough of our meetings we'll approach you to join the organization as a whole. This is done to protect you and us, so please don't be put off by the need for secrecy. However, if you are, you are free to go." He states in that passionate tone that manages to put to rest what little wariness seemed to spread through the crowd as more people wrote down their information and headed for the exit. The public portion of the rally had been short but understandably so. Still Ruby's task here had not yet been accomplished and she knew exactly who she wanted to plant her tracker on.

When the note pad got to her she wrote out a fake name and number before thanking the member in front of her and handing it back. Before heading for the exit though she made her way toward the
large speaker, not caring if she's noticed as the members turn to regard her curiously. Eventually she caught the attention of the speaker as he stood head and shoulders above her. Slowly he lowered himself to be more on level with her before lifting his mask just high enough for her to see a friendly smile.

"Hello, aren't you a bit young to be here alone?" He asks and Ruby smiles in return extending her hand to shake.

"Actually I'm fifteen, just a little short, you know?" She explains taking his hand in both of hers and shaking vigorously, the tracker hidden between fingers. As her hands fall from the shake the tracker is stuck to the inside one of the man's protective gauntlets. She's certain he'll notice it eventually but by then it will be much too late.

He ends the shake and stands to his full height after fixing his mask letting out a loud laugh while patting Ruby's shoulder. "Sorry about that, well you're old enough to be here, certainly. Sorry to push you out but the next portion is for members only kid. I look forward to seeing you at future rallies." He mentions and waves as she makes her way out.

She makes it a block away before breathing a sigh of relief and checking in with her partner. "Okay Em, tracker planted. Is it transmitting okay?" She asks walking her way towards the older girl's position she listens as the reply comes back 'one moment' followed by a stretch of silence and confirmation.

"We got it Ruby, it's reading nice and clear. We'll watch where it goes for the next couple of days and move on once we've got a good idea of the location." Emerald replies and Ruby pauses and hums softly.

"What is it Ruby?" Emerald asks hearing the hum as she starts packing up her monitoring equipment.

"It's just, he mentioned a base outside of the kingdom during the rally remember? What if that's where he's heading now?" Ruby stipulates as she enters a large parking garage and moves toward an elevator removing her mask and putting it away.

"Then I guess we'll have to get transport out that way before we can proceed." Comes the reply over the tinny sound of smooth jazz being played through old speakers. Ruby taps her foot idly as it crawls upward before coming to a stop with a soft 'ding' before opening to show her girlfriend on the other side smiling back at her before joining her inside for the ride back down.

In truth, Ruby could have just waited at the bottom and saved herself a trip in the elevator, but sometimes, it's the small gestures that hold meaning as Ruby leans into the taller thief during the ride back down. Silent as they make their way back home as they have after every job before contemplating what they've seen and heard to go over the next day. But unlike those jobs, this one is only half still need to steal the masks and plant them. Easier said than done all things considered. Still, the guard on the hideout shouldn't be expecting intruders like at the more public rallies.

~Three Days Later~

Two locations stood out on the tracker. The large restaurant in front of them currently, and another location in Mountain Glenn where the tracker kept failing as something kept blocking the transmission. Seeing as neither wished to follow the White Fang into that old tomb, they chose the restaurant. The little signs are there all over the place for those with the thought to look for them. The entirely Faunus staff for one, the unused floors above the establishment for another; where lights are on but there is no admittance for anyone who isn't staff or using the guarded back door.
This would be a heist they are far more familiar with as Emerald enters through the entrance taking her seat at a reserved table for two. A smile at their server from her as she sips gently at a glass of water informing the girl that her date should be coming soon while her eyes turn to look over the room subtly watching the staff looking for any agitation that might mean they've detected an intruder.

"Remember Ruby, in and out. Then you get down here. I don't want them thinking I've been stood up. You know I hate pitying looks." She mutters softly hearing the muffled giggling on the other side of the line. Usually, she would be the one doing the robbing this time around, her skills better for moving unnoticed. But with only limited reconnaissance they had no idea how many would be upstairs and Ruby would have a far easier time talking her way out than Emerald would, being a human. With Ruby's young appearance and heritage, they would be far more likely to let her off easier for her trespassing. Even so, it was a tough sell and Emerald was not in the least bit pleased. And she did not pout. No matter how cute Ruby said it was.

"Don't worry, Em, I got this. I'm entering now, just keep an eye out and we'll be eating in no time." Comes the whispered reply before the pair fall into silence. They may have their banter but this was a job and their targets had great hearing and came armed. Sure, Ruby was scary with her own scythe, but weapons like theirs tended to be very recognizable and to this day they had avoided exposing them so as to avoid them being connected with their combined persona of 'The Green Petal Thief'. They were a last resort if ever they were cornered or attacked.

As Emerald kept her eyes peeled in the restaurant below, Ruby moved from room to room at a low crouch, her hood over her head as she presses her ear to doors listening for anything inside before gently opening each and searching around for their goals. Plenty of maps, chairs and tables for planning operations in the city, and an office for managing the restaurant itself. No masks though. It was a frustrated Ruby that paused at the exit of one of the planning rooms before moving back to the table and grabbing one of the maps highlighting the smaller cells around Vale and folding it into a pocket. Their hope was that this would give the White Fang a hard time right? Giving the cops places to raid would certainly do that.

"Em, I got something a little extra. Fang's gunna have a hard time after the cops find the next Dust cache." she whispers hearing a soft sound of acknowledgement before her ears swivel towards the door. Voices in the hallway outside heading her way. Her eyes narrow and she looks around the room eyeing a couch pushed against a wall along with the table and wooden chairs in the mostly bare room. Not good, she didn't have anywhere decent to hide in here and there was only one door leading towards the voices. In a rush she pulls the couch away from the wall a small bit before getting behind it mentally kicking herself for the lack of forethought as the door opens and a pair of feet can be heard entering.

"Huh? Man it's not even in here, someone else must have grabbed it for you. I told you we should have just asked around." A voice mentions over the sound of rustling papers. There's silence for a moment as one of them walks around before falling gracelessly onto the couch making the thief behind it wince and tense preparing herself to bolt.

"Yeah, yeah just look would ya? I always leave it in here but he's asking for a copy and I want to get it done." comes a second voice as more rustling occurs followed by a pause. And the irritated clicking of a tongue against the roof of a mouth.

The guy on the couch grumbles before getting up and walking over and joining in the futile search. A short time later the first voice speaks up again. "So what do you think about Vanessa?" He asks making the other pause.

"The waitress downstairs? I don't think about her. Why?"
"Not for you genius. I think I might have a shot with her. Should I go for it?" The first voice asks as the other shifts.

"With a face like yours I wouldn't think you'd have a shot at anyone, but hey, she might be blind. I say if you can get anyone to fall for you then go for it." He second jokes back, and if she weren't worried about getting caught she might have giggled at that, listening to the first voice. For the moment she was caught between frustration and worry as they took their sweet time horsing around before eventually giving up and leaving again. Ruby remains in her hiding place for a long moment before getting up and moving to the door cracking it and listening intently to the voices as they trail off.

As Ruby was hiding however Emerald was dealing with a different issue downstairs. Her nervous energy hearing the men through Ruby's mic demonstrating itself in the rapid tapping of her foot which made it seem like frustration at her still missing date to the wait staff. Her waitress coming over and asking politely if Emerald would like to order ahead for herself and her date. Emerald makes a point of pulling opening her scroll in her lap so the girl can't see the screen before sighing and shaking her head with a sad smile. Apologizing for the delay and insisting that her date has promised to be there soon having caught up.

The pitying look she got in return set her teeth on edge.

It took longer than either were comfortable with for Ruby to locate the loot. Two more close calls with Fang members, she finally found a small store room she had passed over before having heard people inside. They were stacked in neat piles inside of boxes. So grabbing a box towards the back and emptying it inside her bag she heads out darting out the window she entered through before making her way down to ground level and vanishing in a flurry of rose petals. No calling card on this job, they did not want the White Fang looking their way if at all possible.

She stashes the loot nearby before running back to get to Emerald at the restaurant, panting hard for show when she gets to the door and explains there's a table waiting inside. A little smirk growing on her lips as she spots Emerald sitting and looking rather irritable. The shorter thief's heart fluttering in her chest as she watches the sour look on Emeralds face melt away before they proceed to make quite a scene with the shorter girl hugging Emerald tightly as her tail wags and apologies rapidly falling from her lips.

Emerald endures the display with a smile as the hug is returned. While the apologies are just for show, the affection is real and neither are ashamed to show it as they part grinning wide before taking their seats. The waitress was unsure about how to react to the display. Two women together, while not uncommon, certainly isn't something you see every day even in Vale. But a Faunus with a Human on top of it? It's like seeing a unicorn.

Still, objective completed and their job nearly finished puts the two in high spirits as they splurge a bit, letting someone else cook for them as a rare treat.

~The Next Night~

"Well, this wasn't too hard." The younger thief mentions after Emerald finishes picking the lock, letting them inside. Ruby's eyes adjusting quickly to the darkness inside the building as she glances around, walking behind her girlfriend as they make their way to the center of the open storehouse, a map of Vale and the surrounding areas pinned on the wall behind an empty desk coated in a thin layer of dust.

"Quite a bit of Dust in here… now where to plant the masks." Ruby goes on looking around as Emerald pulls out the map Ruby 'borrowed' from the Fang hideout above the restaurant, unfolding it
on the table after wiping it clear of dust and planting a mask on a corner as if holding it down. "We can't hide them too well or they might get overlooked. What if we don't bother hiding them at all? I mean, the police were clearly never supposed to find these in the first place." Emerald wonders looking around at the shelves lined with crates of stolen Dust before turning to Ruby, the smaller girl's silver eyes looking as if they glowed, catching the moonlight coming in through the windows. "So, just wanna drop'em and make the call? We can tell Tukson the job is done and be back home with plenty of time." Ruby asks, setting their stolen masks next to the table before looking at Emerald curiously, the older thief looking at the crates speculatively. Before giving a small smile. "Think anyone would mind if we liberated some of this stash for ourselves? I mean, all it's going to do is sit in an evidence lock up and we would save some money if we grab a few crystals and Dust tubes." The mint haired girl ventures, chuckling as she watches Ruby's tail start to wag a little before she vanishes in a flash of petals using her scythe as a pry bar to crack open a few of the crates, already starting to pull the Dust crystals out along with a few tubes of Dust. While Emerald moves around, breaking open a few others randomly. Watching Ruby bundle up their reclaimed Dust, she smiles pulling her scroll to call Tukson. "This is Tukson's Book Trade, home to every book under the sun. What can I help you with?" Comes the cool professional voice of their 'employer' for this job. As if anyone would call for a book at this time of night not to mention the caller ID. "Hello Mr. Tukson, this is Emerald with R&E Package Retrieval Company. My apologies if I woke you. I was just calling to inform you that the package you requested was delivered successfully. I'm sure your customer will be quite pleased." She replies, getting a dry chuckle from the other end. "I appreciate it, I'll let you know when you can stop by for payment, but feel free to come by anytime if you find yourself in need of literature." He returns. A nice way of saying 'I don't have your book yet but come on by if you need a fence.' "I'm certain you'll be seeing more of us soon Mr. Tukson, we are quite taken with your business." She states before ending the call and turning to her girlfriend. "Ruby! Time to pack up, we have a call to make and then we can get some sleep." ~The Next Morning~ "Last night, Vale City Police raided a warehouse discover yet another cache of stolen Dust. We are left to wonder how many of these caches remain hidden within the city, but, according to the Chief of Police, evidence as to the perpetrators of these robberies was found at the scene of the most recent discovery. No details are forthcoming at this time, but, we have been promised more information will be given once it is safe to do so. Next on the morning minute, detractors of Huntsmen Academy in Atlas are once again protesting the sometimes unsavory tactics used by the Atlas military in persuading fresh hunters to join their ranks in the Specialist Division. Arguing that it goes against the idea of the hunters being defenders of the people as a whole, rather than a militant arm of any single kingdom. This is Lisa Lavender and more on this story after a word from our sponsors..."
Ruby looks over at Emerald laying on their makeshift mattress and shivering. Slowly the younger girl cuddles closer and wraps her tail around the older girl, ignoring the damp that sticks to her tail from the rain outside. The older girl had asked Ruby to stay home today while she tried to get some food for them. When she returned, Ruby was already curled up and asleep, but having woken now to the pain in her stomach the younger girl sniffed at the air and could tell Emerald wasn't successful.

Rain didn't come often to Vacuo, but when it did it came hard. Forming rivers and streams in the desert. They wouldn't have to worry about water for a long time now having already collected enough to last them weeks. The problem they now faced was that the rain hasn't stopped and it's been days. It wasn't raining hard at all, but it was enough to keep the crowds indoors. And without the crowds, picking pockets wasn't nearly as safe.

When the streets are too clear they usually resort to a little shop lifting. Not much of course, just enough to get by. Unfortunately, with the rain came flooding and stores were closing their doors for the time being leaving them without any means by which to secure food without breaking in. Shattering glass draws far too much attention. Emerald was always planning ahead and a store owner might overlook some snack foods vanishing but would be far less willing to do so if they just finished fixing a window someone smashed with a brick.

At this point they would even take from the farmers market for food. Another day and they would be truly desperate. Enough to take a big risk at one of the stores with cameras. Ruby offered to pan handle a little just to get them something but Emerald shot it down. A ten year old dressed like they were begging for money? Vacuo was a rough place on the best of days. But the risk of Ruby getting taken away by a well meaning person was too high. Not even mentioning the chance of her getting taken by a more unsavory element.

Ruby flinches as her stomach reminds her why she's awake, gurgling loudly and shooting pain through her. She whines helplessly but tries to muffle the sound as Emerald shudders again. The older girl had clearly tried hard to get her hands on something for them. Tomorrow, Ruby would try to help somehow but for now, she needed to keep the older girl warm. Starving and sick was not a good combination, so Ruby shifts the blankets to cover Emerald more before leaning over and giving her forehead a chaste kiss.

She curls up again after that and tries to go back to sleep as Emerald unconsciously wraps her arms around the smaller girl, bringing her closer, her breath warming the canine ears sitting atop Ruby's head.

Ruby groans and hugs Emerald a little tighter before blinking. It was rare for Emerald to sleep in at all, and even more so for Ruby to wake up before her. Slowly, Ruby opens an eye at a squint, checking the clock for the time and discovering they weren't sleeping in, she just woke up really early.

She gives a soft sigh as she considers her dream that wasn't really a dream. She doesn't usually dwell on memories of their past. She could barely remember a time before Emerald as it is and living on the
streets was a hard life she would rather put behind her. They had this apartment, and the money they were saving was still growing. Perhaps not as quickly as it had just before they left Vacuo but they were in a new city. Which means they would have to wait for new jobs.

For now they would keep on with their break. Help out Junior with small things until he could get them set up with bigger jobs. He would know their reputation of being picky with their jobs and their reputation combined with Mr. Everythings' recommendation would go a long way towards getting them started again. Maybe they could even take a few jobs in other cities and travel some. That would be nice.

All of that would wait though. They just did a job and that meant they got a rest day. As much as Emerald was a bit of a workaholic when it came to their trade, she didn't put up a fight when Ruby demanded that they have a lazy day after big jobs. While it wasn't always the day immediately following, that was usually the case. The Tukson job was six days ago and Ruby wasn't letting Emerald out of the apartment if she could help it.

No jobs, no picking pockets, no shopping or fencing. She would have to hide Emerald's Scroll when she could finally be bothered to actually move from her place curled around her mint haired girlfriend. The little wolf girl was determined that they would be lazy today. And dinner would be great. There were two rib eye steaks in the apartment with their names on them.

Literally, Ruby wrote their names on the plastic wrap covering the juicy meat when they brought them home. She claimed the smaller piece but it was Emerald's turn to cook and she was sure Emerald would swap them. She would have to keep an eye out for that.

Slowly Ruby takes a deep inhale through her nose reveling in the scent of her partner before blushing brightly as the action elicits a response from the girl who was supposed to be asleep.

"Ruby, are you sniffing me again? You know some people would say that's really creepy." Emerald says, one of her red eyes half open as a smile crosses her face, pulling Ruby tighter against her.

"It's not my fault you smell really good all the time." Ruby huffs, grumbling as she turns away from the taller thief in bed. The move doesn't seem to bother Emerald though as she just curls a little against Ruby's back, spooning the smaller wolf girl.

They remain like that for another hour before Emerald starts to get up, half dragging Ruby with her until she gets the younger girl to take her shower while Emerald starts breakfast. She gets halfway through when her scroll goes off. Reaching for it, she blinks as a flash of rose petals invades the kitchen before trailing back to the bedroom.

"Ruby, what are you doing? That was probably a job." She comments loud enough to be heard by the smaller thief.

"I know! And today is our rest day so I'm taking away your scroll!" Comes the voice as it moves back into the bathroom.

"Fine, today's a rest day, just bring it back, I still want to see what the message is about. And don't shake yourself dry!" She says with a smirk as Ruby blows a raspberry at her from the bathroom where she is no doubt toweling herself off. Emerald sets out the plates as Ruby come in and pouts at her.

"I'm not a dog Em, and that's racist." She points out, pointing at Emerald with the scroll while pretending to be put out as the taller girl crosses the room taking the scroll before pulling Ruby into into a hug before scratching at the base of the faunus' ears. It only takes a moment under those deft
fingers for Ruby's tail to start wagging again as a lazy smile comes across her features.

"I'm so sorry Ruby, I didn't mean to offend you." She says, kissing Ruby's cheek. The younger girl wasn't really offended and they both knew it. Neither understood why some Faunus got upset when the traits of animals they share some form of biology with are insinuated to be shared. Ruby liked meat almost raw, wagged her tail when happy, and panted when tired. She also had to resist shaking herself dry after bathing and getting water everywhere. She owned it because it was natural for her. It's not like she went around humping legs or marking her territory but she could take a joke about it.

Ruby continued to bask in the attention for a short time before the smell of breakfast pulled her away from the embrace while Emerald followed at a slower pace looking at her Scroll with interest. "Ruby, we have a job tomorrow. Nothing too big, just a safe crack, I can handle it if you play lookout. Junior wants to test us, I guess. Also there's some paperwork inside one of his customers wants. The rest is our payment."

Ruby hears the explanation and leans back in her chair. Tapping her lip with her fork for a moment before nodding with a shrug. "Sure, make sure he know's he'll be paying us if the safe doesn't have enough money or valuables to cover our work."

~The Following Night~

The job was cut and dry. Everything went just as the information said, letting Emerald slip in unnoticed through a vent. Bypassing the cameras watching the exits of the small building. Some corporate place with a cheap security force, only four in the whole building. One at the front desk, one patrolling the first floor, a third in the monitor room and the fourth wandering the next three floors, taking breaks to smoke on the roof.

Honestly it was boring, and Ruby watches from across the street through her binoculars as Emerald enters the office and moves to the safe before groaning in boredom, her legs kicking idly as she tries to keep herself busy.

"Em, wanna just walk out the front door? I mean, then we can at least challenge ourselves a little." She jokingly suggests watching her girlfriend as the girl turns to give her a deadpan look through the window.

"I really don't think that's a good idea, they do have cameras here and we're leaving our calling card." She mentions before taking out the earpiece and pressing her head against the safe as her hand manipulates the dial. The soft clicking of the tumblers guiding her until she turns the lever and pulls open the safe. Ruby is positively shaking with excitement as she watches. Finding out what's inside the safes is her favorite part of this type of job. Honestly though, it's a little anti-climactic when what's inside contains bound folders of paperwork and a few stacks of lien. All of which are emptied into a case Emerald carries with her for the job. When it's filled she looks as the remaining Lien and groans pulling out a bag that she pours the rest in.

"Heads up Ru, I need you to head on over and get ready to grab this bag. I need to drop it so I can make it back through the vent. I'll drop the rest too, so be ready." She says moving to a window as Ruby moves from her perch using a fire escape to reach the street before heading across. The road is empty and she looks both ways before speaking again. "Alright Em, it's all clear drop 'em when you can." She says tapping her foot as she hears the window opening above. She looks up in time to catch their loot as it falls towards the street. She's halfway back across the street when she hears Emerald curse through the feed. With wide eyes she turns around ignoring the fact that she's in the middle of the road. As she looks back at the building.
"Em! Em, are you alright?" She says whispering harshly as she nervously twitches. Torn between running back to her perch so she can see and running into the building after her girlfriend. It isn't until she hears Emerald reply that she relaxes and heads across the street choosing to wait at against the wall of the building across the road with her body in a shadow cast by the street lamp.

"I'm alright Ruby, almost got caught by the smoker. Guess he snuffed his cigarette early. In any case, our calling card is in the safe and I'm on my way out now. Maybe next time I'll just scale the building. Vent's aren't all that great, you know?" Emerald comments with a slight echo in the comm from her tight quarters. Once she get's free she crosses to meet with Ruby taking the case with their objective as they head off towards Junior's club.

As usual, Junior makes a point to be seen and often spending most of his evenings either behind or in front of his bar counter as he talks business with clients for manpower or information. It looks a lot less suspicious to be seen talking with a stranger at a bar while having a drink or making one for them than it does to meet them in the privacy of his office.

It was while serving a drink to a few young civilians that his scroll jingles and he answers turning away from the bar while motioning for one of his men to take over.

"This is Junior." He answers simply knowing that whoever it is will either tell them so or give him what he needs to figure it out. There's a moment on the other side of the line before he realizes it's the second.

"Hello! I'm a courier with R&E Package Retrieval Co. I'm just calling to let you know me and my partner have a package for you. We're a bit young so if you wouldn't mind letting your bouncers know to expect us we would be very grateful. Once we arrive we'll head straight to your office since we need some paperwork signed, you know how it is I'm sure." The voice of Emerald states with all the cheerfulness of a professional delivery person.

She waits long enough for him to verbally agree before hanging up and he lets his bouncers know to let the girls up before heading to his office himself. He seats himself behind his desk with a groan before settling in to wait for the pair of young thieves. He would admit to being surprised at the speed. He expected them to take longer with the job after he told them about it the previous day. He'd only handed over the details on the job that morning to the pair and they already cased the place and made the robbery in that time?

He's brought out of his musings when the door is opened by one of his men and the two girls step in the younger faunus rushing up to his desk and offering him her scroll. The screen showing a company logo with a brief description of whatever is being delivered, the place the package was received from and a place for the recipient to sign with their fingertip or a stylus.

'R&E Package Retrieval Co.'

Customer: Hei 'Junior' Xiong

Destination: Customer's Club

Package Description: Assorted paperwork and files.

Payment Due: N/A 'Paid in Advance'

Customer please sign here:

He blinks and signs the scroll along the line and hands it back to the small girl who grins at him
before saving the document and putting the scroll away while Emerald sets the case on the table, opening it and pulling out the folder holding Junior's files before passing them to the man. He opens it and glances over them to make sure before setting them in a drawer of his desk before looking back up to see the two girls watching him expectantly. Apparently this meeting was going to be more than a simple exchange. With a sigh he runs his hand down his face before glaring at the two tiresome girls with a small amount of irritation. "What?"

Emerald huffs before responding. "This job was small potatoes Junior. The contents of that safe barely covered our usual fees for just agreeing to look into a job. We were given assurances that working here in Vale would be even more lucrative than Vacuo with the higher standard of living here." She starts letting Ruby start in her place.

"We understand if it was a test, a test to make sure we're really as good as our reputation says but this was almost embarrassing to put our name on. Way below our usual kind of target, you know? So, you know, step up the jobs please. At least with this, people will know we've changed cities so you should be able to pick up a few clients looking for us specifically. Just remember, half up front if they have intel, all of it if we have to figure something out for ourselves. We can do our own gathering, of course, it just takes time that we'd rather not spend if we don't have to." Ruby explains and Junior is left with a twitch in his eye. Not used to having people working for him dictating terms to him.

Then again, the girls weren't really under his employ. The deal was that he found them work and took a small cut of the profits in exchange as well as being allowed a voice in what they take by making a special request. This was not how he usually did business and the difference grated against him. It was only the knowledge that the girls could cut him out that kept him from just washing his hands of the irritation.

The whole thing bothered him. He wasn't used to this style of business and he knew it. It would take him some time to adjust and in the meantime he could always ask Everything how he usually dealt with the girls. He didn't want to be cut out anymore than he knew the two girls in front of him didn't want to have to deal with the minutiae of dealing directly with clients. Preferring to keep their anonymity, save the small number of people they had to.

"I'll try to keep an eye out for more profitable jobs. Heat's on pretty high in the city at the moment but it's starting to die down with the police having so much luck recently." He comments, using his fingers to make air quotes around the word 'luck'. "This job could go either way actually. If they get all stirred up they might start sniffing. Don't worry, you two are covered on that front. The problem could come from the client end. Raised heat means less job offers, but with clients knowing who they're hiring they might start rolling in anyway. No way to tell for at least another week." He explains, getting a pair of nods before a small stack of Lien was tossed to him from the case Emerald pulled the folder from.

"What's this?" He asks turning over the stack of money in one hand before dropping it on the table. It wasn't bad but it wasn't anything special either, not really enough to get worked up over.

"That's your cut. When we said the job was small potatoes we weren't joking. The percentage on this job is bad because the pay was crap. We emptied that safe completely too, not that we expected much after we finished looking over the file." Emerald stated and he grimaces. It wasn't enough to make the effort setting up the job worth it for him either. He understood their frustration then.

Mr. Everything had set him up with the same deal the broker had previously stating that it was very lucrative helping the girls provided it was handled right. Junior had assumed it meant he had to be careful around them. Now, he realized it meant he would have to raise the stakes on the jobs the girls took. High risk, high payouts. The rules the two girls had made much more sense as well and he
nods leaning back as his hand picks his share up turning it over his hand.

He did have one other job he had planned on passing over to Torchwick as none of his guys had the skills for it. Not that Roman did either, but the orange haired criminal knew people and had a strange skill for pissing people off while still getting them to agree to working with him. Still, he would need to check with these two before moving forward with it.

"How do you two feel about working with another thief?" He asks leaning forward on his desk.

"Not thrilled." Comes the immediate deadpan response from the older girl as Ruby snickers behind her. "We don't play nice with strangers. There's a reason literally everyone from the random civilian to any underworld info jockey thinks the Green Petal Thief is not only male, but a solo act, and much older than we actually are. So far, we're only aware of one person who's pieced it together who we actually are and we haven't seen her since we left Vacuo behind. If you can guarantee us that we won't come into contact with this other thief then we'll at least consider it." She offers trying to offer him some kind of middle ground. They only just started working together and he seemed far more rigid than Mr. Everything had been.

"Ahh, I'll see if it's something that can be worked out. Probably not worth the hassle putting you on it as well anyway. If that's all, go on ahead, I have to make a call to my client about his files." He says before setting his scroll on the desk making the terminal screen appear while the two girls make their exit.

~The Next Night~

"Next on tonight's news, the infamous Green Petal Thief has come to the streets of Vale. Until a few months ago, the Green Petal Thief was a criminal believed to be a master thief capable of getting into any building and past any security system but kept his thefts within the city of Vacuo and outlying towns. With his calling card turning up in Vale after such a long break, does this mean he has moved on from his city of origin or that he has merely expanded his range of work to the other cities of Remnant? At first, Vale City Police believed they had a copycat on their hands until the calling card was confirmed to be authentic, now we are urged to keep a wary eye out for signs of the mysterious thief as police continue to investigate the criminal." The voice of Lisa Lavender states, a still frame image of the thief's calling card taking space in the upper left corner of the screen. The news report draws a number of reactions from different groups around the city.

In Ruby and Emerald's apartment the two drink from glasses of milk after clinking them together while following the report, smirking at each other as they watch Vale react to the news of their arrival in the City.

"Well, they won't have to wonder if we're here to stay soon enough. If Junior doesn't turn up anything really good soon we can always find something shiny to grab ourselves." Ruby comments, finishing her glass before setting it on the low table before turning on their couch so she can set her head into Emeralds lap letting her look up and into the red orbs watching her in return.

Emerald drinks slower as her free hand settles between Ruby's ears scratching gently making the shorter girl's' eyes close in contentment, snuggling closer to the toned stomach of the older girl. "Let's just hope we can get a few more jobs done before we start dealing with the paranoia the richer targets started to develop back home." Emerald counters swirling her glass idly.

"Paranoia won't protect their things from us Emerald. No one's ever gotten it over on us, I can't see it changing anytime soon." Ruby comments with a giggle.
"Careful, Ruby, if you say things like that we're almost guaranteed to have trouble here." The older thief comments, chastising the younger girl. Only to roll her eyes at the mischief that's shot back at her when Ruby pulls away from the scratching hand and stands up trying to look aloof.

"Oh? So, what if I said something like. 'There's no chance you'll let me be the big spoon tonight'?” She questions hope hiding behind her weak attempt at acting casual. Her swaying tail doesn't help her case either.

"Well, in that you would be absolutely right." Emerald replies her eyes closing as she hides her mirth with another slow sip. When she opens her eyes again one of them lifts as she spots Ruby pouting, her ears drooping and tail having stopped it's sway. She knows it won't last more than a moment but the adorable scene does tug on the heartstrings.

And they both know it.

With a sigh Emerald finishes her drink and washes out the empties before moving back to Ruby giving the wolf girl a little push towards the bedroom. "Oh fine, you can be the big spoon." She cedes, chuckling when the pout vanishes like the sun appearing from behind a cloud bank.

"What the hell is this?! Some punk thinks he can take the spotlight in my city?!” A voice shouts into the silence left behind after the broadcast ended before a crystal is thrown through the space the screen had taken up minutes prior. There's a pause before the first voice sighs and continues. "Our city, of course, of course. My apologies, Neo."

Roman Torchwick was not a happy crook, knowing that the Green Petal Thief was in his town and redirecting the spotlight. Unlike the Green Petal and his own partner Neo, Roman took a liking to being the most wanted criminal in Vale and the attention it brought him. An entire city taking notice of him, as if acknowledging his skill and prowess.

His picture was everywhere in the City, his name spoken from top to bottom and he wasn't taken lightly by anyone as he continued to evade police and huntsmen alike. The sound of his gloves gripping and twisting around the haft of his cane, Melodious Cudgel, can be heard over his irritable growling.

Neopolitan can't keep her amusement hidden as she watches Roman fume at the attention being focused momentarily on the new thief in town. She knew plenty about the heists performed by Green Petal, both confirmed and speculated. He had an artistic flair and willingness to draw attention to his crimes while claiming credit in a way that was similar to Roman while also keeping his true identity a complete secret, much like Neo herself.

She moves closer to the tall fuming crook and sets her hand on his shoulder patting it in a way that would seem patronizing to most but only seems to calm the man himself for the moment as he loosens his grip and takes a deep breath.

"You're right of course, my dear. We'll just have to make our own deeds stand for themselves. So what if he steals a little while hiding behind his little cards? My face is all over the city and we still keep ahead of the cops. Some two-bit newcomer isn't anything to get riled over." He affirms to himself before turning away, missing the way Neo rolls her eyes before watching his retreating form fondly.

The cool eyes of headmaster Ozpin close the viewscreen and he takes a slow sip of his coffee before kneading his fingers together in contemplation. He received a call earlier from the chief of police
asking for him to spare one of his huntsmen or huntresses to help in dealing with the risk of the
newest criminal on the streets of Vale. The Green Petal Thief's high profile and record for leaving
very little for anyone to follow up on convincing the police chief to ask for assistance in this. His
hands reportedly being full dealing with looking into the White Fang when their last Dust roundup
produced more than they ever expected it to. Now they were rushing to follow up and couldn't spare
the manpower to chase down the Green Petal.

Unfortunately, Ozpin wasn't in a much better position himself. With most of his associates busy
securing the Maidens after the close call Amber had on the road, the security around the Maidens had
to be doubled and everyone with access throughly vetted. It was exhausting and left Ozpin with only
his teachers nearby to rely on.

If only they were between semesters or during break they would be available to help the police. But
as it is, the only people with any form of free time and training would be the students in attendance.
The upper years just weren't around often enough, shadowing Huntsmen and Huntresses and
performing missions that kept them away as they focused on performing jobs as a full group so they
can learn how to handle life after the academy.

With a low sigh he pulls up the listing of teams for the first and second years before focusing on one
team in particular. Smart, strong, and at least one of them knew how to be subtle. They would have
to do. He could only hope the Green Petal wasn't the violent sort if the girls did manage to catch up
to him. Not that he was really holding out for it, it was unlikely the thief would be caught after so
long by a group of first year trainee's.

In the Beacon dormitories a group of girls looked to each other after the news ended. Only Blake had
been really interested in the beginning until they started to talk about the Green Petal Thief. That
drew the attention of the rest as they listened, paying attention to the knowledge that the thief had
expanded or moved into the city below.

"We should look into it." Blake states immediately drawing looks from the rest. Of course it's Weiss
that replies first.

"We should focus on our school work. It has nothing to do with us and we would probably only get
in the way since none of us have any real investigative experience." Weiss counters with narrowed
eyes, not wanting to be dragged into spending late nights chasing shadows and coming up fruitless
for the trouble.

"Oh come on Ice Queen, it could be fun!" Yang replies, wrapping her arm around Blake's shoulders
in a show of support for her partner. Grinning right back at the glare developing on the face of the
heiress.

"It is not going to be fun. We are not some kind of vigilante group, we're training to be huntresses
and I would like to focus on that!" The white haired girl says before letting out a very undignified
sound as their team leader passes by. Her eye twitching in response to having her rear smacked by
the amused girl.

"Well it might be fun, but either way, let's figure out if we'll try anything after talking to the
headmaster tomorrow." She offers waving the scroll in her hand. "He's called us to his office to talk
about something so that's what we'll focus on." She explains before looking at the pink tinge on
Weiss's face. Amused green eyes giving the uptight heiress a wink before the team leader heads to
her bed for the night as the rest of her team watches her.
Ozpin was tired. He didn't look it but safeguarding the world from unseen evils, protecting young women with powers bordering on apocalyptic, hiding relics of mysterious origins and abilities all while running a school filled with teenage superpowered warriors would take it's toll on anyone. Even an immortal body jumper.

At least he had moments like this early in the day where all was quiet in his office save for the soothing tick of gears turning in his clock tower office. He slowly lifts his cup to take a sip of the black life giving fluid known as coffee, hoping that today might just be a little easier to deal with than the day before.

The knock on his office door did not give him much hope as it opens before he can even respond. Glynda was quick and efficient and years of working with him this morning interruption was routine and usually marked the end of his relaxing morning. The students would start waking up soon and today's fresh dose of barely contained mayhem would begin.

He lets out a low sigh before turning around and looking at his assistant and smiles in greeting. "Good morning Glynda, I hope you had a good night's rest?" He says getting a stiff nod in reply to his usual greeting. It was all so routine at this point as she set a folder on his desk for his perusal over the course of the day. He moves to sit in his chair setting his coffee down as he opens the folder and looks into the faces of four promising students he was about to send out to try and catch an infamous thief.

He would have to call the police soon and inform the commissioner that he would have some students helping out. The man wouldn't be happy in the slightest at getting students instead of full huntsmen but there was nothing that could be done about it at this point. It was students or nothing and these were the most promising he could spare for a mission that was less to do with protecting lives and more to do with protecting valuables.

The Green Petal Thief had never killed anyone after all.

Glynda left after the usual exchange of pleasantries and talk of individual students leaving Ozpin alone to work on as much of his paperwork as he can in solitude reading mission updates and correspondence from the city council and his contacts abroad. Atlas was having trouble with the White Fang again. That city was usually the main point of tension between the races and a constant source of frustration for Ozpin as he searched for peaceful co-existence.

A cup of coffee, a mild headache and a half hour later the headmaster puts away most of his work as he hears the tone informing him that someone is using the elevator to his office. He takes one last look at the faces of the team before placing their file in the folder as well. He leans over his desk with his fingers steepled as he waited for the double tone to tell him it arrived.

"Please come in." He comments as the four girls enter his office the leader in front as they line up in front of his desk in their uniforms. The tall blonde looking bored while the heiress and former terrorist both look uncertain.

"You're no doubt curious why I've called your team here." He starts looking into the green eyes of the team leader with oddly styled turquoise colored hair to see her curiosity aimed back. "I wonder, is your team familiar with the criminal known as 'The Green Petal Thief'?" He asks inserting his scroll
into his desk and projects an image of the thief's calling card above it for the team to look over.

"A notorious thief rumored to be capable of slipping unseen past any security system. Only setting off anything on his way out, either as part of his escape plan or for his own amusement, as no one has ever gotten a look at him, no one can be sure one way or the other." Blake comments before elaborating. "There was a news segment about him yesterday mentioning how he may have moved to Vale since it's the first theft he's committed outside the city of Vacuo following a few months of silence."

"Absolutely correct Miss Belladonna. The police in the city are uncertain they can handle a thief of his caliber on their own and have reached out for the assistance of huntsmen. Unfortunately we do not have anything to offer them in the way of graduated hunters and so I am giving them what aid I can by selecting a team I believe might be capable of giving the help they need." He states and pauses setting his hands in front of him on the desk as he eyes the team meaningfully. It takes a moment for his words to set in and when they register he can't help but smirk at the shocked looks on their faces.

"I trust team RWBY to represent Beacon well in front of the Commissioner, and please do keep in mind that the actions of your team reflect not only on yourself Miss Chloris but on the school as a whole." He comments looking into the eyes of the team leader.

There's a pause before the team reacts all at the same time, though with very different responses. Reese smiling with amusement as Yang gives out a loud cheer, Weiss rubs her temples with a groan, and Blake gives a pleased smirk. "I see you are all pleased with this mission. This will not excuse you from all of your classes but allowances will be made. Please do your best not to abuse this leniency." Ozpin states before handing over a small manila folder with everything gathered on the Green Petal Thief to date.

"This is all we have to go on?" Reese asks incredulously when she opens the folder. The profile was vague and small, depictions were guesswork. The only tangible evidence was the image of the calling card. The only thing of note was the list of past crimes and speculation on how they were achieved.

"Unfortunately, yes, Reese. He is not believed to be a master thief for no reason. He has eluded capture for many years, even when trained hunters have gone after him. We don't expect you to apprehend him, simply assist the police in any way you can." He says relaxing as he leans back, letting the meeting become much less formal with the use of first names.

"Don't worry Headmaster, we'll catch your burglar." Reese comments offering Weiss and Blake the folder before posing confidently only to wince when Yang slaps her on the back with a laugh.

They left talking quietly to each other while Ozpin looked on. He wasn't really expecting results but hopefully the Commissioner would be placated by the effort those girls put in. He certainly wasn't happy to hear he was getting students instead of full hunters.

With a sip of his coffee Ozpin sighs and gets back to his work. The coffee was cold now but the work was never really done.

~A few hours later~

The downside of having set up the R&E Package Retrieval Company was that occasionally Ruby or Emerald had to be seen actually working to keep up the image of being a legit business. It was also an upside too, depending on how you look at it. Using the business they found themselves capable of delivering items and packages to places they want to check out ahead of time.
And at least in this case, Ruby was doing a delivery for Tukson. The fence might deal in illicit items out of his back room but he actually did enjoy his books.

The tips he gave didn't hurt either.

The uniform took Ruby and Emerald forever to agree on before finally settling on simple black pants, white shoes, with a red button up shirt decorated by green trimmings. Black letters stitched into the breast of the shirt gave Ruby's name in bold lettering under the company name. A white ball cap on her head stamped with R&E and cut so her ears could poke through was something Ruby liked to wear but it took Emerald some convincing to do the same.

Still, it was usually Ruby who did the actual deliveries. She enjoyed running around more than Emerald did and Ruby couldn't help but admit that she didn't mind dealing with customers as much as Emerald. Her girlfriend could fake it but Ruby just had a bubbly personality that shone clear when dealing with people in a delivery setting. Sure she wasn't comfortable with strangers but when it came to delivering be it food or packages, people were rarely unhappy to see her and the short interactions were perfect to keep her from getting anxious.

Right now, Ruby was in the process of bringing in a few books Tukson had coming in from the docks. He used to just have them delivered in the mail but Ruby and Emerald would deliver them the same day they came in.

Still, Ruby was in a bit of a hurry today. She wanted to finish this so she could see if Emerald picked up a new job for them that might prove to be actually lucrative. So it was expected she would be running. It was never a problem but it would be just her luck that as she rounded a corner on her way she would come face to face with a group of girls crowding the sidewalk. She didn't have time to stop or dodge around them as her eyes went wide and she cried out running straight into the tall blonde who didn't even budge as Ruby is bounced off to land painfully on the ground with a pained wince.

"Ow ow ow, dammit." She says dusting herself off before opening the box to make sure the books were okay after being dropped. She lets out a huff in relief when they seemed fine before closing the box again and picking it back up, holding it to her hip in one arm before looking at the girl she ran into.

Tall, busty, blonde, and strong. There's a concerned look in her lilac eyes that sets Ruby at ease. She wasn't looking forward to getting yelled at for running into someone but really, they were blocking the whole sidewalk. Who walks in a group like that? It's just plain rude.

"Hey are you alright?" The question comes from a girl with green eyes and turquoise colored hair. "You hit Yang here pretty hard. That must've hurt, right?" She asks even as the girl in white next to her takes one look at the canine tail and pointed ears on top of Ruby's head before huffing and turning her nose up.

"Huh? Oh, I'm fine. Sorry about bumping into you girls. I would have tried to dodge around you but there wasn't any room. Are you okay?" Ruby asks the now named Yang before her eyes dart to the girl dressed in black. The girl smelled like cats and her bow twitched as she looked at Ruby uneasily. Closeted faunus then, sad day in Remnant when a faunus has to hide like that to feel included with humans.

"Oh I'm fine, takes more than that to hurt me." The blonde boasts bumping her chest with a fist. "So what are you in such a hurry for… Ruby?" The blonde asks her eyes falling on the name emblazoned on Ruby's shirt.
"Oh! I'm a delivery girl. Like the mail service, only cuter. Mostly small packages and letters between businesses but we do private work too for individuals." Ruby replies before blinking as she starts to notice more about the girls. Namely that all four of them are armed. "Oh! Are you huntresses?! Oh that's awesome! Me and Emerald tried to attend one of the prep schools for awhile but we didn't have the knack for it. We made our own weapons and unlocked our auras but we just didn't have the talent for fighting monsters." Ruby says rapidly as she looks hungrily at the different weapons on display. The lie of their false identities back in Vacuo falling easily from her lips.

"Well, we aren't there yet. But we're training for it. We're team RWBY. I'm Reese, I already mentioned Yang, the uptight one is Weiss and that's Blake." Reese explains relaxing into the conversation even as she listens to her partner tapping her foot with impatience. The humor of meeting the young Faunus girl who shares a name with her team making her smirk back at the heiress.

"What are you carrying?" Comes the quiet voice of Blake as she looks at the box tucked under Ruby's arm.

"Well... that's usually client confidentiality. But I don't think Mr. Tukson would mind me telling anyone I'm bringing him his usual collection of books from the docks. That's Tukson of Tukson's Book Trade, home to every book under the sun." Ruby says repeating the catchphrase with a giggle. "Stores not big enough to make that literal but if he doesn't have what you're looking for he can order it. My girlfriend has him trying to get her one even now." Ruby admits. Smiling as the promise of books has the cat girl perking up with interest. Emerald would get along with her, Ruby has spent more than enough time around Emerald and books to spot another bibliophile easily.

"It's not too far from here if you girls want to come with?" Ruby offers with a friendly smile burying her social anxiety in professionalism. Besides, if these girls are Beacon students then they could be her and Emerald's ticket onto campus without drawing undue attention.

The group looks between each other for a moment, Blake looks eager to follow drawing grins from Reese and Yang while Weiss just looks resigned, palming her face and shaking her head. Soon enough, Ruby was walking and talking with the group as she explained more about R&E to them giving them business cards with a smile after explaining that they can even deliver food from Vale to Beacon.

It didn't take long after that when the inevitable question came up. Though while Ruby had expected it from Reese or Yang she didn't expect Blake to ask it. Then again considering the girl hiding her own heritage perhaps Ruby should have.

"No one bothers you about being a faunus with your traits so open like that?" the Cat girl asks hesitantly. Working to avoid freezing up when Ruby chuckles and gives her a knowing wink.

"Well everywhere you go in the world there's always gunna be someone who doesn't like you Blake. So while sure some people give me crap for being a faunus, it's not worth letting them get to me. Hiding it would just show them that I'm as ashamed of being a faunus as they would want me to be. That and hiding my tail would be both difficult and uncomfortable, trust me. After all, wolf tails aren't prehensile." She says skipping ahead a little before turning around her ears perking up. "I'm a faunus and I'm not ashamed of it. And anyone who tries to pick on me for it better hope my girlfriend doesn't hear about it. Not that I need her around to punch someone in the nose. But if it's up to me that's as far as it would go. Emerald can be a little more... aggressive in defending me." Ruby admits with a blush.

"Ruby and Emerald, huh?" Yang probed, and certain gleam coming to her eyes. But Blake sidled up closer to the blonde's side with a sharp elbow.
"Yang," Blake's tone full of warning.

"But, Blake-

"Look at her, Yang. If you mess that smile up with one of your bad jokes I will replace all your shampoo with Zwei's… No puns," The black haired faunus threatened, getting a wide-eyed look of horror in response with Yang reaching for her hair and slowly caressing it as if trying to calm down a scared pet. Before the blonde could respond to the threat though, Ruby came out of her reverie enough to respond.

"Yeah, she's great. And both our names are gemstones! We were just meant to be together!" She swoons ignoring the snickering from Reese and the still frightened Yang as she clears her throat, blushing darkly before pointing onwards and starting to walk again. Her eyes finding the familiar lettering of the booktrade and she picks up her pace slipping inside and skipping up to the counter to ring the bell as the team files in behind her and starts to look around the cozy space.

Ruby sets the box on the counter when she hears Tukson announcing that he'll be there in a moment as she brings up her scroll for him to sign leaving it on top of the box as she turns around to grin at her new friends. "Isn't it nice? I love this store." Ruby admits only for her ears to perk and swivel and her tail to wag with excitement as a familiar scent hits her nose. Her head whipping to the left to spot her mint haired goddess smirking at her.

"Hello Ruby, make some new friends?" Emerald gets out before her name is shouted and her arms are full of overly affectionate wolf faunus. The chuckling from their audience has her tanned cheeks coloring even as she wraps an arm around Ruby's waist while the other removes the girls ball cap letting Emerald scratch gently between the two ears.

Embarrassed or not, Emerald was not going to let these strangers stop her from showering her affection on her younger girlfriend it seemed.

When Ruby's head tilts back and she steals Emerald's lips in a soft lingering kiss, the older girl can only hold her tighter while flushing at the pair of wolf whistles coming from the group.

With the kiss broken the red eyed thief looks to Ruby and motions her head towards the four watching getting a beaming smile back. "Well Ruby, introduce me please. They have me at a disadvantage I think."

She follows Ruby to the store counter before facing the four girls with a smile. Before Ruby can say anything however Blake's eyes go wide and her mouth open to blurt something out in shock.

"You're a human?"

That get's her a glare from Emerald who wraps her arm more securely around Ruby's waist protectively as the other clenches into a fist. "Yeah, what of it? Think because I'm a human means it's wrong for me to love a faunus? Come closer and I'll show you-" She starts before Ruby gets on her tiptoes and starts whispering in her ear. Emerald's eyes narrow again but she's not glaring anymore as she looks Blake over before sighing and letting her fist unclench.

"Sorry about that. I just get tired of people spewing bigoted crap around us. We get enough from both sides you know? Either I'm lowering myself by dating a faunus or she's falling for my human lies. It's enough to make anyone a bit defensive." Emerald explains trying not to out the cat girl in front of her team.

"Well I think they're a cute couple." Yang declares shrugging off the awkward air before starting to browse through comic books even as a deep rumbling laugh echos from the back room with Tukson
entering the store.

"Agreed! My favorite customers make quite the pair." He declares signing the scroll with a finger before passing it to Ruby along with a generous tip before pulling the box down and placing it under his side of the counter.

"Tukson! I brought you customers! Be nice to them." Ruby says grinning as she pockets the scroll and her earnings.

"I'm nice to all my customers, Ruby. Now, Emerald has been waiting for you to show up so get going you two and thanks again for being so prompt." He retorts waving them out of his store.

"Alright, See you later girls!" Ruby calls out getting a variety of responses as she leaves the store with Emerald's hand grasped in her own. Talking about their real job in front of a bunch of huntresses in training would be stupid.

Emerald and Ruby step into the apartment together and the older girl smiles as she moves to the kitchen while Ruby sits at the counter separating the kitchen from the living room, her elbows on the counter top as she watches Emerald start dinner.

"So what do you have for us?" Ruby asks shuffling in her seat with boundless energy as Emerald chuckles.

"Junior came through for us this time Ruby. There's a collection of Jade statuettes coming through Vale from Mistral. Dated about four hundred years old and the town they were recovered in was completely ruined by the Grimm a long time ago. Worth a fortune." Emerald mentions watching Ruby tilt her head waiting for the interesting part.

Ruby knew Emerald too well, if she was could already tell that Emerald had a special interest in this job.

"Think we might want to keep a souvenir?" Emerald asked unfolding a picture and sliding it across the table to Ruby. The younger thief picking it up and gasping at the little statue circled on the picture.

A small wolf made entirely out of jade standing on a boulder with its head raised mid howl. It was perfect. She could even see the fur carefully carved into the little creature even it's eyes looked real. As if the small creature could come to life at any time and finish it's call to the moon and go on the hunt.

It was beautiful… Ruby wanted it.

"Emerald you know we can't keep anything we steal. It's too risky." Ruby says with a sigh. She looks at the little wolf with longing before sighing and folding the photo back up. She wanted it, but not enough to risk getting caught down the line with it. That would ruin everything Ruby and Emerald had worked so hard to accomplish.

Emerald sighed and nodded taking the photo back before giving Ruby a soft smile. "True… But we'll have it for at least a little while before we hand it over. Let's enjoy it while we can." She said and Ruby bobbed her head grinning back at Emerald. The smaller girl's tail already wagging behind her as her fingers went to the promise ring on her finger. Twirling it around the digit as that goofy smile started on her lips. Earning a small smirk from Emerald as she watched Ruby play with the ring.
The mint haired girl knew what was coming next, Ruby had done this enough times. Emerald turned back to the stove turning off the heat and pulling down a glass from a cabinet while pretending not to notice Ruby slipping from her seat and prowling around the dividing counter. She didn't even fight it when Ruby pounced, bringing Emerald to the ground and proceeding to kiss the older thief rapidly.

It took a while before Emerald sat up and smiled at the wolf girl curling contentedly in her lap on the ground. "I can't cook from the floor Ruby." She said without moving her arms from around the smaller girl. Reluctant to let her go in spite of her words.

"We won't starve missing one meal." The younger girl replied petulantly snuggling tighter to Emerald's chest.

"If you get up I'll pour you a glass of milk and finish dinner. Then we'll cuddle all you want." Emerald offered letting her fingers trail along the shirt covering Ruby's back. Her nails scratching gently at Ruby's spine through the fabric.

"Fiiiiine, but milk first." Ruby stated before slowly pulling away and moving around to retake her seat smiling shyly at Emerald over the rim of the glass once it's been given, holding it with both her hands the way she has since they were children.

"I love you Ruby." Emerald said, leaning across to kiss the wolf girl's forehead.

"I love you too Em."

It didn't take long for Ruby to capitalize on her promised cuddling as she set the dishes in the sink to be taken care of the next morning before tugging Emerald towards the bed. Things like 'being tired' were not going to get between this little thief and her much deserved cuddling. She ignored the amused chuckling of her girlfriend as well when she burrows under the covers for awhile seeking the perfect comfortable position before finally settling her head on Emerald's chest.
"So, detective, mind leading us through what the police have so far?" Reese asks the scowling man looking at the nearly empty display case at the museum. The sign in front of the case declaring it to be an exhibit on some miniscule statues from Mistral, made of jade that were recovered from the ruins of a long since overrun village.

However, all that was on display behind the glass is a very familiar calling card featuring a green gem over a bed of bright red flower petals. The statues themselves nowhere in sight.

The detective sighs and shakes his head. The whole situation was already showing the signs of producing a rather massive headache. Dealing with children acting as amatuer detectives was only proving to make it worse for the man.

"Look kids, it's not that I don't respect your ability or appreciate you coming here to try and help out. But protecting people from the Grimm and catching a notorious burglar known for outfoxing any security team or system he comes across are two completely different sets of skills." He says, only to be met with four gazes displaying various degrees of affront and anger.

"Whatever, look I'll humor you girls. First we need to figure out how they got in...

...Ruby and Emerald stand in front of the roof window hatch before sharing a look that screamed of mischief. Emerald approaches first, setting a little device on a window pane opposite the security system monitoring the window. Once placed, Ruby takes some time to pick the locks, her tongue poking out of the corner of her mouth until the slight click indicates she's free to open the window. With a small grunt the two lift the window up and prop it open while Emerald gets close, pulling her weapon and releasing a length of chain before stabbing the blade into the roof and starting to lower herself down. "Remember the plan, Ruby?" She asks before her head drops out of sight. Getting a roll of the eyes from the younger girl.

"Of course. I wait up here until you can get to security office. You drop the sensors in the vents, and I use them to get close to the display case." Ruby states with a grin as Emerald gives her a smile before dropping out of sight, leaving the wolf girl to wait as Emerald swings on her chain to a nearby banister. She gives a few tugs before letting the chain go watching carefully while Ruby pulls the chain up and coils it near the sickle still stuck in the roof.

The mint haired thief looks around carefully before drawing a mirror from her pocket, using it to glance around corners to watch for cameras as she makes her way to the security office. She tuts as she notices that not only is the door shut and locked with a card reader, but there's a pane of glass giving a view into the office and vice versa. Slowly she crouches out of sight and waits for a guard to leave the room. "Ruby, security office is locked with a keycard. Sit tight, I'll move in when someone comes out." She mutters into her mic only to smirk at the adorable and impatient growling sound Ruby makes over their radios.

Meanwhile up above, Ruby is pouting looking from the vent to her weapon knowing full well it wouldn't fit in the tight space with her, forcing her to leave it behind and entering with only a small pocket knife, a length of flexible wire, a bar of thin metal, and the padded case to house the statues.
After double checking her equipment she was left to bounce in place and shift with growing frustration. Ruby could do patient, she really could. But with their prize so close and the excitement of the heist right in front of her, she had a hard time sitting still. It was part of the reason why she usually was the one doing the actual grabbing.

There were other more important reasons, true. But that was still one of them.

"Oh, make 'em hurry up Em! I wanna get started." She whines pacing in front of the vent cover slowly before starting to circle it entirely.

Back in the hallway, Emerald has to cover her mouth to muffle her chuckle before responding. "And how do you suggest I do that Ruby?" Emerald asks with a whisper, her eyes shifting back to the door before trailing down the hall to watch for approaching guards. Fully aware that her girlfriend is probably pouting above her on the roof.

The response she gets was not the one she was expecting though. "I dunno, seduce him? I would fall for it." Ruby offers brazenly causing Emerald to sputter for a moment in wide-eyed surprise before pausing in silence. She lets it linger until Ruby speaks again. "Em? You there?"

"Hmmm, you know that might actually work. Let's try it." Emerald offers struggling to keep her voice stoic as she listens to Ruby gasp and start panicking over radio.

"Em, no! I was only kidding!" Ruby pleads as Emerald stays quiet for a little longer before chuckling softly.

"I know, Ruby, calm down. You know I'm devoted by now. Now hush for a moment, I think I see movement." Emerald states before the line goes quiet just before the door handle is turned and it swings inward, leaving Emerald to abandon her spot as she rushes closer, already activating her Semblance to stop the guard exiting from seeing her in the hall. As he passes her by, she sticks out her foot to stop the door from closing. She waits for him to round a corner before slipping in, shifting the focus of her Semblance from the previous guard to the one still inside sitting in front of the monitors.

"Alright Ruby I'm in, give me a second to study how everything looks and find the security controls for the vents." She looks around at the various monitors, not afraid of talking in front of the guard as she hides her sounds and movements from him. Finding the controls, she carefully leans around the guard to press a button on the panel, the green light turning red. "Alright Ruby, you're in. I'm going to snag his access card." She states before grinning as she hears Ruby give an excited sound followed by the slight echo of her moving through the vents...

...The Detective sighs, rubbing his face as he shifts his weight to one leg hand reaching into a pocket for a pack of cigarettes that he places between his lips but doesn't light.

"We're working on the assumption that the thief came in through the vents with the help of an accomplice right now." He says getting an odd look from three of the four girls in front of him. "What?" He asks in a grumpy tone.

"The Green Petal Thief has always worked alone that we know of. In every account he's never even been considered to have a partner." Reese explains, her team having gone over the file they had been given thoroughly. Well, she and Blake had and explained it to their partners. Weiss listened well but Yang just looked really bored when they were talking about it.

"Didn't say partner. I said accomplice, as in an inside man. One of the guards was alone in the monitoring room when the sensors in the vents were turned off last night." He tells them watching as
Reese frowns in thought while Yang speaks up.

"That's hardly enough to label him an accomplice." The blonde counters getting a nod from Blake.

"That's not all we have against him. It's what the logs say happens next that tightens the theory…" He replies gesturing with his smoke...

...As Ruby moved further into the building, Emerald took a moment to compare the camera positions to their intel before starting the job. When it matched up in the areas she wasn't certain of she gave a nod before turning with her newly acquired card and left the room, heading for her next destination. One thing they had been somewhat worried about going in was the knowledge that the case could only be opened remotely and their intel wasn't able to determine where exactly the controls for it were.

Their options then became finding the controls quick enough or performing a smash and grab. The latter far less elegant than their usual work, and much riskier too. If they smashed the case then there's no doubt the alarm would be triggered and the chances of getting spotted would go up immensely.

When Emerald didn't find the controls in the guard office she contemplated simply going for it anyway. Since with both of them moving around the museum, it meant there was no one to watch the monitors and guard rotations. At least this job was paying well for the risk they were taking.

Still, cat burglars do not enjoy potential surprises.

"Ruby, controls weren't in the guard office. I'll hit a few offices on my way to the curator's office just in case. Don't want to backtrack if it's not there either. Get ready to find a good hiding place if you get to the statues first." Emerald mutters, using her mirror to check her corners.

It thankfully didn't take her long to get to the curator's office, the others she passed by not having anything really interesting inside nor anything that might be the controls. The plaque on the door giving it away clearly, as did the keycard lock.

"I win!" comes a whispered exclamation from her earpiece meaning that her girlfriend had, unsurprisingly, beaten Emerald to her goal. Even with the vents slowing her down, Ruby was always quick. And they'd memorized her path the night before.

"Yeah, yeah, stay in the vent for a moment, I'm entering the curator's office. Just waiting for the camera to pan away." Emerald replies looking above at the camera she's parked under. Once it starts to move away she breaks into a sprint, running as fast as she can for the door. The card in her hand sliding into place allowing her to slip into the room just in time for her to avoid the camera.

"I'll have to use a window to get out of this room. I don't want to risk getting spotted by that camera when I leave." She informs Ruby as she circles the desk and looks around at the terminal before pulling open drawers. It's in one of these she finds a panel with little paper labels for sections of the museum, one of them conveniently listing the remote switch.

"Alright Ruby, I've got it. Let me know when you're ready. Once I turn this off the curator will get a message and the clock starts." Emerald says her finger hovering over the button as she waits.

It's another long minute before Ruby gives her the go ahead and she unlocks the display case counting down from ten vocally before relocking the display. A smirk growing on her face only to expand into a full grin when Ruby gives a slightly too loud sound of triumph before muffling herself with a whispered 'oops'.

"Ruby, controls weren't in the guard office. I'll hit a few offices on my way to the curator's office just in case. Don't want to backtrack if it's not there either. Get ready to find a good hiding place if you get to the statues first." Emerald mutters, using her mirror to check her corners.

It thankfully didn't take her long to get to the curator's office, the others she passed by not having anything really interesting inside nor anything that might be the controls. The plaque on the door giving it away clearly, as did the keycard lock.

"I win!" comes a whispered exclamation from her earpiece meaning that her girlfriend had, unsurprisingly, beaten Emerald to her goal. Even with the vents slowing her down, Ruby was always quick. And they'd memorized her path the night before.

"Yeah, yeah, stay in the vent for a moment, I'm entering the curator's office. Just waiting for the camera to pan away." Emerald replies looking above at the camera she's parked under. Once it starts to move away she breaks into a sprint, running as fast as she can for the door. The card in her hand sliding into place allowing her to slip into the room just in time for her to avoid the camera.

"I'll have to use a window to get out of this room. I don't want to risk getting spotted by that camera when I leave." She informs Ruby as she circles the desk and looks around at the terminal before pulling open drawers. It's in one of these she finds a panel with little paper labels for sections of the museum, one of them conveniently listing the remote switch.

"Alright Ruby, I've got it. Let me know when you're ready. Once I turn this off the curator will get a message and the clock starts." Emerald says her finger hovering over the button as she waits.

It's another long minute before Ruby gives her the go ahead and she unlocks the display case counting down from ten vocally before relocking the display. A smirk growing on her face only to expand into a full grin when Ruby gives a slightly too loud sound of triumph before muffling herself with a whispered 'oops'.
"Alright, Ruby. Get to the roof. I need to make a detour back to the office. You know what to do."
Emerald says slipping outside via the window and moving across the sill before working her way
around the brickwork separating the windows of one office from the room next to it and continues on
for a few rooms before finally entering one and rushing to the door. Already she could hear the
guards getting riled up as they comb over the building. No doubt the curator already called in to
report the alert he received.

Slowly, Emerald works her way back, having to pause more than once to let guards run by her in
the halls, the whole time very aware that the Police were likely already on the way. Thankfully she
manages to slip back into the monitoring room with little effort as she returns her stolen keycard and
reactivates the ventilation sensors.

When she turned away however, she saw the worst thing was happening. Another guard was
coming in and the guard at the monitors was turning around, forcing her to activate her Semblance
on both of them at once.

The headache hit her like an icepick to the temple and she grit her teeth as she moved carefully to
the door doing everything she can to keep them from seeing her or the door as she opens it to head
back out and make her own escape...

"...Ya see? The logs have his card being used to get into the Curator's office. We would just assume
he did it all alone if not for the vent being turned off and the fact that he didn't have near enough time
to get from the office to the case and back while it was unlocked." The detective explains, leaning
back on a railing and folding his arms across his chest to watch the girls reason it out for themselves.
Already prepared to answer any questions the girls might have.

"That… is pretty damning." Yang admits, even as Weiss nods in agreement.

"Do you have a picture of the guard?" Reese asks and looks over the file displayed on the detective's
scroll thoughtfully once he hands it over.

"Were the cameras disabled too?" Blake asks her eyes drawn to the calling card still on display inside
the case where the statues should have been. Stepping in while Reese was paying attention to
whatever was on the scroll.

"No, they were on all night. Doesn't mean the feed couldn't have been messed with, though. We'll
have the tech's look over the footage at the station." The detective admits.

"I don't believe it." Reese states simply handing the detective back his scroll as her team looks her
way waiting for her to elaborate. "I mean, the guy has no prior criminal record, no active aura, and
he's not exactly built for stealth. How long did the guards report it took them to get to the Curator's
office? A few minutes at most right? You can't believe that guy was able to get there and back
completely unseen by either the guards or the cameras." She retorts, giving the detective a look that is
disbelieving at best.

"I don't want to believe it either. But it's the best we have to go on. The guard couldn't even claim his
card was stolen since he still had it on him. Do you have an alternative?" The detective asks, his teeth
biting into the filter of his still unlit cig.

"The thief stole his card, used it for what he needed, and put it back?" Yang offers reluctantly and
scowls when the detective gives her a long look that conveys his disbelief at the notion. Entirely
unnecessary since Yang herself didn't look convinced of the notion either.

"Still doesn't explain how he managed to get all the way to the display case and back." The detective
finally says and the girls look downcast. He knew the feeling. There was a bad feeling in his gut that the guard was innocent. At least his involvement couldn't be proven more than circumstantially he was going to have to look for a new line of work, but the odds of serving prison time were very unlikely.

"Look girls, people have been trying to catch this guy for a long time. You can't expect to get lucky and find something out the first day on the job. World just doesn't work that way. I suggest you kids get back to Beacon while we wrap up here, and don't let this get you down too much." He says looking at his still unlit cigarette longingly.

The girls looked despondent but nodded before turning to head back to their dorm for the day. They pause though when he makes a sound and pulls up another image on his scroll and offers it to them.

"One question, we found this mark on the roof when we were checking the vent up there for clues. Any idea if it would have anything to do with our cat burglar?" He asks and the girls study the image for a moment before Blake shakes her head.

"Looks like a blade was stuck in the roof. You see more marks like that on top of buildings the closer you get to Beacon. Students acting out action scenes from movies or running on the roof to avoid the busy streets." Blake answers for the group as the scroll is handed back. "Oh, and cat burglar is an offensive term that casts a negative light on Cat Faunus." She adds with a nod, ignoring the odd looks everyone around her start to give...

...Ruby was almost growling with frustration as she uses the bent metal bard to carefully try and relatch the cover on the vent with her inside. It's a tricky angle and there's very little leverage as she turns the bar with her tongue sticking out. she only had one more attempt before she would have to give up and leave. She was cutting it too close on time.

Lucky her that this time the latch handle caught and when she rotated the bar the vent closed up. she gave it a test shove before retracting her bar and squirming around before rapidly crawling her way back to the roof.

She barely managed to pull her tail out of the vent behind her when the security came back on a laser sensor, made visible by the dust in the vent as she worked to reseal the opening on her own. She fights the temptation to say something about it to Emerald but with the guards alerted and scrambling, Emerald needed to focus and Ruby didn't want to distract her.

Ruby moved over to the skylight Emerald used to get in. The blade of one of her weapons still buried in the roof. The gun-sickle still in it's Kusari-gama form when Ruby picks up the pistol handle and the length of chain connecting it to the blade before heading to the propped open window.

She doesn't have to wait long before she hears Emerald's voice saying 'Now!' signaling her to drop the part of the weapon not lodged in the roof. As it drops she watches Emerald dive over the banister for it. The image of her girlfriend dressed in tight black clothing with the moonlight pouring in cutting across Emerald's curves as she swings for a moment before starting to mecha-shift her weapon, the chain drawing into the handle and pulling her up towards the roof.

Ruby is forced to swallow audibly as she waits for Emerald to get up. Cursing her young teenage hormones that always make it so difficult for Ruby to avoid jumping her girlfriend anytime she did something she could even consider provocative.

It's just after Emerald gets onto the roof that Ruby removes the prop for the window and gently closes it before swiping the device that disabled the alarm on the window. She turns to Emerald and they pause to look in each others eyes. Both grinning before they turn and start running away even
...Ruby sighs as she returns to the apartment in the evening. They handed over all the little statues the night before and Ruby spent the entirety of this one running around carrying packages for Junior. He was nice enough at least, and she didn't smell any drugs on them, that was a bonus.

Not that drugs would stop her from delivering them. Being on the streets you get hardened to some things, and if someone wanted to throw their money at drug induced obliviation, then that was their business so long as they didn't bother her or Emerald.

No, drugs just would have made her more careful about stopping anywhere long enough for someone to get curious.

She barely limps over to the couch before dropping herself onto the couch so her head lands squarely in Emerald's lap, the mint haired girl already removing the ball cap and running her wonderfully dexterous fingers through Ruby's dark hair. A few happy little growls are pulled from her as she curls up, her tail thumping slowly on the couch cushions.

"You know, Ruby, if you don't want to run around so much you don't have to. We make more than enough on our big jobs for you to hold off now and then. You almost missed our favorite program." Emerald comments even as Ruby grumbles and flips herself over so she can see the screen while Emerald continues the slow scratching behind soft triangular ears.

Ruby would have responded to tell Emerald that she actually enjoys the delivery side job most days, if not for both the fact Emerald already knew this and that Lisa Lavender's face appeared on their screen with an image of the museum they robbed behind her.

"Two days ago, Vale was once more subjected to a robbery by the notorious Green Petal Thief. We had hoped that the first crime was merely a copycat criminal. But with a repeat performance, it seems like the citizens of Vale are not so lucky and the master thief has truly moved to our city as his previous home of Vacuo has since reported that they have not had a crime related to The Green Petal for some months leading up to his relocation." The newscaster states in her usual calm manner.

"This time the thief struck at the History of Remnant Museum and made off with a set of small jade statues recovered from a long overrun village outside of Mistral. The jade statues are said to be priceless pieces of Remnants history, but far from the most valuable pieces on display leaving the police department baffled as to the reason why. Details of how the thief managed to overcome the museum security have not been forthcoming from the Police Department who have been quoted stating that they do not wish for the criminal to know how close they are to making an arrest." She continues before the museum photo is exchanged for the Image on their calling card.

"The Police Department wishes for us to remind you that while The Green Petal Thief has yet to assault anyone, he is still a dangerous criminal and capable of lashing out if cornered. If a citizen comes across any information on the thief please inform the police department immediately and refrain from approaching the criminal." Lisa finally finishes before focusing on the next new item, leaving the two young thieves to grin at each other.

Silver eyes catching on red before both sets flutter closed and the gap between them is shortened when Emerald ducks her head into a long, gentle kiss.
Team RWBY was once more spending their evening within Vale investigating the Green Petal Thief. After a week without any crimes taking place that could be proven to be committed by the infamous thief in Vale or elsewhere in Remnant, Yang had come up with an idea.

It wasn't something anyone else had been expecting and while it would take quite a bit of leg work to see if it went anywhere it was worth at least checking out. Which is why they were once again speaking to their new official police contact, the detective from the museum heist.

He didn't have an office for himself. He had a desk, a computer, a chair, and a board separated into sections with photos from various active crimes attached via thumbtacks. A board that was slowly being engulfed as everything on the Green Petal slowly grew like mold to dominate the board, as if seeking total domination of the detectives time.

Oh, and he had a name plate that read 'Detective Pine'.

"You kids want to run that by me again?" Pine asked running a hand over his face as he dearly hoped he had just heard them incorrectly.

"We were hoping to be provided with a list of everyone moving from Vacuo to Vale during the time period between the last confirmed heist in Vacuo and the first one committed in Vale as well as another one for anyone who owns a home in both cities." Reese requested for the second time a broad smile on her face.

"And you want this information… why?" The detective asked in a weary tone as his fingers inched closer to the front pocket of his shirt where the outline of a cigarette pack was plainly visible.

"Well Detective Pine, my teammate Yang here had a great idea to potentially narrow down the pool of suspects. The Green Petal moved operations from Vacuo to Vale and hasn't been seen anywhere else since he started his robberies again. It stands to reason that when he moved job areas, he also moved homes. Or at the very least has rented out somewhere in Vale he can stay when not out on a job."

"We can even rule out places like hotels since it would be a risk of the place he's staying has any kind of housekeeping. He would want somewhere more secure, potentially somewhere he would have the only key to."

"Tell you what, we don't have the resources to do this with everything going on lately chasing down the local White Fang."

This time the Detective did pull one of his smokes out and lit it only after having set a small air purifier on his desk and turning it on, careful to blow his smoke towards the small plated box. "You four are aware that a majority of people moving into the kingdom come from Vacuo and we're talking about a period of over half a year." Pine explained with a sigh before tapping his fingers on his desk before glancing at the board and shrugging.

"Tell you what, we don't have the resources to do this with everything going on lately chasing down the local White Fang." He starts holding up a hand as he takes a drag. "I'll get you four that list, but you'll have to make the house calls yourselves. You'll get badges to show you're working with the police. Anyone who doesn't let you in just mark them on the list and I'll do what I can to get you permission to look around. Do not abuse this, if you do I will happily toss you back to Beacon and we will be contacting the headmaster. Understand?"
Pine waited until they nodded before he got up to get all of that sorted out. It served two purposes really. He did not relish having to work with the trainee's in the least. Not only did this get the students with no experience in investigation out of his hair but the idea did have some merit. They just didn't have the manpower to go door to door visiting every migrant from Vacuo in that time period. Having the girls spending a few evenings devoted to the task might just turn something up.

Emerald smiled as she returned to the apartment with a small box encased in red wrapping paper. It took awhile to find someone in Vale who could make the little item inside but in the end Emerald was able to track someone down and the finished product was something she just knew Ruby would love.

She would admit that she was having a small amount of trouble figuring out just how she would give the item inside to her girlfriend.

She could leave it on Ruby's pillow for her to find that evening when they went to bed. But knowing how often Ruby flung herself onto the mattress that was a disaster waiting to happen. Likewise, she could put it on display and wait for Ruby to notice. As airheaded as Ruby could sometimes appear to be she was as skilled a thief as Emerald herself and likely would spot the addition right away… Unless something distracted her.

In the end, Emerald decided it would be best to just give the gift as it was meant to be. A present, and according to Ruby, all presents must be wrapped appropriately, even if the paper is just old newspapers and thrown away string because they didn't have money to buy tape.

With a small smile on her lips Emerald decides to have a little fun with the package and sets it on the counter before writing a note that read 'Fragile do not open, shake, lift or tilt the box Ruby' and set it next to the box. That done, Emerald slipped away into the bedroom and began to wait.

She wasn't kept long as Ruby burst into the apartment and promptly dropped onto the couch in the living room. "Em! I'm home! Junior has a job for us coming up too!" Came the slightly muffled shout and Emerald smirked in response before moving from her spot on the bed and towards the bathroom.

"Alright Ruby, I'm just about to take a quick shower so I'll have a look when I get out." Emerald replied and let her grin grow wider as she slipped into the bathroom and began to run the water. Sure it was a little mean, but really the mint haired girl couldn't help herself sometimes.

As the water began to run Ruby rolled over on the couch with a sigh. The day had been a little trying for her, no deliveries for Tukson but she did have a few. Mostly legitimate work with a few packages that needed to be handled with discretion. It didn't help that she caught one of those last types muttering about faunus when she turned away but money is money. And Ruby always made her delivery with a smile.

Didn't mean she wouldn't go back later and steal something shiny from the jerk but hey, at least he wouldn't have to deal with a broken nose like he would if Emerald had heard it. Ruby figured he was getting off light.

Sitting up the wolf girl stretched and yawned, her ears perking and turning towards the door to the bedroom as she began hearing Emerald humming a song. Ruby wasn't familiar with it so it was probably something classical her girlfriend had downloaded on her scroll. With a small grunt Ruby stood up and turned towards the kitchen to get something to drink when she saw it.

A small box sitting on the counter in shiny red wrapping paper. The wolf girl's tail started to wag
slowly and picked up speed as she walked closer her hands reaching for the box as her fingers wriggled greedily. By the time it was within reach her tail was going full force only to pause when she noticed the note left with it.

Her ears drooped first, her tail stopped it's wagging and a pathetic whine left her throat that built in volume. All thoughts of her drink forgotten, Ruby sat upon a stool at the counter separating the kitchen from the living room and stared at the box giving it a small poke. She pouted at the box that teased her so with whatever might be hidden inside.

There was a reason why Emerald was the better safecracker between them. While Ruby knew how to do it and had better hearing to help with the process, she was not the most patient of individuals. Always wondering and fantasizing about what could be inside was a distraction that frequently had Ruby being forced to start over whenever she had to perform the task.

It could be another ring! Maybe a proper engagement ring? They were a little young for that still and Emerald had given her the promise ring less than a year before so, that was unlikely. A necklace? The box was in an odd shape for it to be that. Usually necklaces came in more rectangular boxes and this one was more of a cube the size of Ruby's fist. A book? No, the box was again too small and Emerald knew Ruby wasn't as much a bibliophile and wouldn't have bothered to wrap a book.

A new weapon part! That had to be it. There were dozens of parts that Ruby wouldn't mind having added to her growing collection that would fit in that box. The smaller thief had been considering building something smaller than her Crescent Rose or Emerald's Linked Avarice for day to day use.

Especially considering that since they were not registered as students in Oasis anymore it was technically illegal for them as underaged not-yet citizens to walk around armed. And with the Vale Police being a little more straight laced than the department in Vacuo, there was a much higher chance of the girls being called on it if they walked around with visible weapons. Something both of them were eager to avoid. The Green Petal Thief might be a master thief with police hunting him with furor but Emerald and Ruby were determined to be 'just a pair of sweet teenagers'.

Well, Ruby tried to be sweet anyway.

With the idea of a new weapon part in mind Ruby's tail began to wag rapidly again until her eye caught sight of the note and most importantly the first word on it.

'Fragile'

Now what weapon part could Emerald have bought that would be fragile? Weapon parts are almost universally tough and needed to be just that in order to stand up against any possible encounter with the Grimm. Unless what was in the box was Dust, but then they had plenty of that from the framing job they pulled. They didn't need any more dust at present and Emerald certainly wouldn't wrap it up as a gift.

Frustration hit the wolf girl and she let out another whine before turning towards the bedroom where she could still hear water running from the master bathroom. Surely Ruby could get away with just lifting the box to see how heavy it is. There's no way Emerald would even know she did-

"Leave it alone Ruby!" came Emeralds voice echoing off the bathroom walls and carrying clearly through the rest of the apartment.

Ruby's ears drooped again, darn it.
of papers the Detective handed over to them. Each page contained a list of names and addresses that
started at the top and went right down to the bottom.

"Cool your jets kid, there's only around nine hundred on that list after we got rid of duplicate
addresses for family members. You lucked out that it's even that low. Now if you're suspicion is right
and Green Petal has property in both Vale and Vacuo then he'll be one of the highlighted people. I
had those names placed at the front for that reason." Pine replied leaning back in his chair. "The rest
are organized by street name so you're not wasting your time running all across Vale when you
might have another potential right next door."

Reese nodded quietly as she thumbed through the pages as if looking for any that might stand out.
When nothing did she released a small sigh and offered it up to Blake. "Well girls, we might as well
get started on it now. The more we delay after all the longer this is going to take." Chloris offered
already turning away when the detective's voice brought her up short.

"Forgetting something?" He asked before setting a grouping of small badges on the table. "You're
essentially being temporarily deputized. You're not official police and we would be giving you any
equipment but these should earn you some legitimacy. Just remember what I said earlier. You screw
up with these and we'll bounce you girls right back to Beacon."

The badges were enclosed in hard leather folders that protected the face of the badges from
potentially becoming marred over time. After each girl took one Yang flipped hers open and snorted
for a moment. "I could buy a more convincing one at a costume shop." She joked before noticing
how everyone's eyes turned to her in suspicion and she hastily defended herself weakly. "Not that
I've ever done anything like that, impersonating an officer of the law is illegal, you know?"

Reese recovered first and gave Yang a long once over. "I dunno, you wouldn't look half bad in the
uniform." She joked in reply before chuckling at the looks that garnered her. "Alright alright, joke
time is later, let's get to work girls. I want to get some of this dealt with this evening at least. And
we've been here to long as it is."

It was after they all wrote down a few names and addresses from the first page that the Detective said
should be be close enough to each other that the group split up to cover more ground quickly.

As Blake looked over her own list none of the names stuck out at all to her as being suspicious
though the last one did seem a touch strange.

Hive Gentry, who names their child "Hive" was he some kind of faunus? It wouldn't be the first time
parents named a child after their faunus trait. Still, the address was on her list and Blake supposed she
would find out when she got to him.

Emerald left the shower and took her sweet time toweling off before slipping into a pair of
sweatpants and a simply t-shirt a small smile crossing her lips as she witnessed Ruby's eager and
impatient shifting as she stared unerringly towards the simple red present. The mint haired thief
slowly walked over wrapping her hair in a towel before she wound her arms around Ruby's waist.
Emerald left a small kiss on Ruby's cheek as the smaller girl relaxed in her arms only to get a pout in
response. "You're a bully Em, a big mean bully." Ruby whined and squirmed trying her best to
squirm and hide the wagging of her tail as it was pressed between her back and Emeralds stomach.

"I just wanted to watch you open it, that hardly counts as being mean." Emerald countered with a
smirk at the smaller girl even as she earned herself a disbelieving look.
"Uh-huh, and you just didn't realize I was due home any minute when you decided to start your shower as well?" Ruby replied trying to keep her smile of her face in favor for a sterner look that was just a few shades away from convincing.

It wasn't working.

And since it wasn't working Emerald was able to pull off a perfectly convincing look of innocence. It was amazing really how well Emerald could do that too. Unless you really knew the older thief telling what she was really thinking when she was putting on an act was next to impossible for most people.

Then again Ruby had known her girlfriend for nearly a decade and knew exactly how disingenuous Emerald was really being and it only served to make her pout instead.

"Unless… do you not want the present? I was so sure you would like it." Emerald asks hesitantly still acting as she made no effort to pull away from the embrace with Ruby. "I mean, I'm here now and there's no reason you can't open-"

And suddenly the box vanished from the counter with a speed the mint haired girl couldn't follow, in its place was a pile of ripped wrapping paper and a moment later Ruby gasped loudly. In her hands was a small statue of a howling wolf made out of green stone. "B-but Em, you know we can't keep this. It... it's…" The wolf girl protested even as she drew the small statue closer to her chest despite her own words and Emerald could feel the fur of Ruby's tail swishing rapidly against her exposed stomach.

"It's a replica. Not even real jade and the maker placed a stamp on the bottom. It's entirely legit and all yours." Emerald replied smiling as Ruby handled the statue delicately, cradling the small wolf in her hands as gently as she could manage before setting it back on the counter.

Emerald felt Ruby turning around and loosened her grip on the smaller girl to help only to find herself hugged so tightly she felt her back crack. Emerald made a strained sound before Ruby loosened her hold. Not that the older thief had any time to comment on that however when she was pulled down and into a kiss her cheeks reddening as Emerald felt a moan pulled from her lips.

When the kiss broke Emerald smiled happily at the nuzzling wolf girl in her arms. "So I take it I did good?" she asked her smile turning into a grin when Ruby nodded rapidly into her chest.

When they finally broke apart, Ruby immediately picked up the statue again and began darting around the apartment setting it down here and there, turning it this way and that looking for the perfect place to display the small trophy.

And in a way that was what the statue was. Something neither had ever done before because of the potential risk in keeping something they stole. After all stolen or 'hot' items tended to burn people foolish enough to hold onto them. That's what black markets and fences were for in the end. A way to discreetly get rid of items to people who knew people with the skills to break down the valuables for resale or find buyers able to keep their mouths shut about where and how they got the item.

Dinner that night hadn't been anything special or hard. A pasta dish they could keep leftovers of to eat over the next few days and neither bothered to eat at the counter choosing to cuddle up on the couch. Ruby turning on the news as Emerald looked at the next job Junior was lining up for them.

It was a bare bones idea at the moment with the club owner looking for input on something coming down the pipes. More would be available in a few days but the heist itself wasn't going to occur for at least a few weeks, possibly longer.
"Hmmm, four floors, decent property size… what is it with Vale's high society and owning land they
don't do anything with? Is it just so other people can't have it because that's just messed up. I mean
space is at a premium in this city compared to Vacuo." Emerald complained before shifting the data a
bit more. "Mmm, six floors if you count the two basement levels. Looks like Junior is willing to
throw in a little extra if we grab a bottle of something expensive sounding from the wine cellar too.
They have… a hedge maze? Good news is that it goes right from the edge of their property to the
side of their house. But the bad news is we'll have to get an aerial shot of it and memorize the layout.
Nothing about security yet or the thing we're supposed to be grabbing."

Emerald sighs and sends a short response to Junior letting him know that the job sounds doable thus
far before closing her scroll and leaning back in her seat. She was just starting to relax too when
someone began to knock on their door. The pair looked at each other curiously before Ruby got up
to answer the door freezing halfway there at the words that followed.

"Mr. Gentry? We're with the police and we'd like to ask you a few questions."

Blake was half way down to the street again after her second to last home when her scroll went off
and an image of Reese appeared on it. The cat faunus answering on her way down the stairs towards
the street. "Hey Reese, I've only got one left on my list, how are you doing?"

"Oh, we're all done. Want us to come along on your last one and we can get something to eat after
and head back to Beacon together?" Reese offered simply and Blake paused as she considered it for
a moment before responding.

"Yeah alright, that sounds nice actually. I'll send you the address and see you all in front of the
building." Blake replied getting a sound of agreement before the call ended and the faunus smiled at
her leaders general lack of decorum.

To be fair, had she been called on it, Reese would have simply used the excuse that they were going
to see each other soon anyway and didn't see the point in wasting time with a goodbye. Weiss was
still attempting to hammer courtesy and decorum into their leader with… mixed results.

Blake had to admit she was a bit annoyed that her team leader had beaten her to the last apartment
building on her list. She wasn't surprised given that Reese had her hoverboard, but still annoyed. At
some point during their evening it seemed Yang had made a side trip to Beacon's garage and gotten
her bike because the pair wasn't kept waiting long when the blonde arrived with Weiss riding behind
her.

"You know the four of us won't fit on that bike if we're all getting dinner after this. How are we
going to work that out?" Reese asked while Blake double checked the floor and apartment number.

"Two of us can grab a cab and I'll give a lift to whoever's left and follow behind, no biggie. We can
do the same when we head back to Beacon." Yang replies with a negligent wave of her hand as she
kicked down the stand and removed her key from the ignition.

"Has anyone else met anyone suspicious who could fit the bill of the Green Petal?" Weiss asked as
they entered the lobby and headed for an elevator. Apparently Mr. Gentry was on the ninth floor of
the building and none of them wanted the extra cardio after having spent the evening already moving
up and down buildings that lacked the convenience of a working elevator.

"Else' Weiss? You say that like you've met someone who might fit the bill." Blake mentioned as the
whole team turned their attention to the heiress.
"Too many potentials to be honest. I understand not wanting to let a stranger into your home but I had a badge and everything! Only one family on my list invited me inside and there was just no way any of them could have been the thief. The parents were… not in the best of physical shape." She said as politely as she could manage.

"Oh my, I wonder why no one wanted a pushy heiress poking around their home looking for anything shady on behalf of the police." Reese replied rolling her eyes. "And nah, had a couple places that didn't let me in but I don't think any of them fit the bill either. I marked the addresses for the police anyway but it's more likely they just had some drugs or something. Laws for that stuff are different between here and Vacuo after all and if that's the case they'll have dumped whatever they have by the time the VPD comes around anyway."

Yang had received similar results to Reese in the end along with a pair of invitations to dinner she had turned down while Blakes results had been somewhere between the two more outgoing team members and Weiss. Not that anyone had been surprised by that, even Blake was aware that her usual demeanor could be a bit unsettling to strangers.

They found the apartment fairly quickly once they got off of the elevator and Reese turned to Blake. "Alright Belladonna, he's on your list so you do the talking. We'll help look around though if he lets us in." she offered before leaning against the wall next to the door as Blake approached it.

Blake nodded at that and walked up to the door knocking on it a few times. She waited a moment before noticing the sound of a T.V. inside and chose to announce their presences vocally as well.

"Mr. Gentry? We're with the police and we'd like to ask you a few questions." The faunus stated and her ears twitched as she tried to listen for any sound coming from inside the apartment. She could hear a TV playing the news and the sound of voices talking but the door and ambient noise from the TV was keeping her from understanding what exactly was being said. Then the voices stopped and a few moments later the door was cracked open enough for a familiar face topped with wolf ears to poke out.

"Um… hi?" Ruby asked looking just as surprised to see the team as they were to see her.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!