The Noble Roses
by Mr_Gravia

Summary

Gifted with incredible power and the ability to share it with others, Ruby Rose fights to protect all she holds dear against those that seek to destroy it, friends and comrades by her side. Contains elements of life as an mmo. RWBY/Guildwars.
A young Ruby Rose sat huddled by a tree, a stone's throw from her house on Patch. Tears flowed from her eyes, and her sobs echoed through the nearby woods.

"What troubles you, young one?"

Ruby looked up from her sorrows to see she had been joined by a huntress. She was beautiful, tall and slender with straight golden hair. She wore a dark blue combat skirted dress, with added on plates of beautifully detailed gold colored light armor, and carried an intricate staff as a weapon.

Though eyes red from tears, Ruby spoke. "It's my Mother's birthday today."

"A birthday is usually a time of celebration, not sadness." said the huntress.

"It used to be". Ruby said tears beginning to fall again "But not anymore, Mom…she's not here to join us. She vanished during a mission a few years ago, and we've not seen her since."

"I see.." said the huntress, understanding on her face. "This world is a harsh one indeed, but do not let sorrow consume you. Rejoice in the memories of your mother, and the life you enjoyed together. Mourn her, yes, but always remember the love she had for you, for it will always be there, no matter what fate your mother has endured."

Ruby wiped her eyes. "You think so?"

"I know so" she said, "I am a mother myself, after all. You have the same air as my son, in fact. He is often sorrowful, but brave and true when the time is right. His judgement sound, and his actions dedicated to uncovering the world as it truly is."

"You sound proud of him." said Ruby. The huntress sat down beside Ruby and nodded.

"All parents are proud of their children, young one. Though at times, my son can be a bit vengeful."

"I guess I can understand that. When I think of all the people hurt in this world, I get so angry. But it's the grimm I hate the most. People may do bad things for money or petty hatred, but the grimm...they do bad things because it's just their nature to do such. It's so senseless."

"Strong words for one so young."

"Probably the only thing about me that's strong. I'm a terrible fighter, unlike the rest of my family, though Qrow, my uncle, says I have talent. He's promised to take me under his wing when I start at Signal Academy next year."

"Sounds like your Uncle cares for you deeply, and sees something in you that you yourself appear to be blind to."
"I can't imagine what that could be." Ruby said, a dejected tone in her voice.

The huntress thought for a second. "Often times, our greatest strength is not in force of arms, it's in the power of our convictions, our ambition, our dreams. What is it you dream for, young one?"

"I want to be a huntress, like my Mom."

"Oh? And why is that? Do you seek revenge on those who took her from you?"

Ruby shook her head. "My sister tells me stories of heroes and adventure, of those who traveled the world helping people, and that's what I want to do: Help people. And huntresses have the greatest power to do that."

"A noble goal indeed, and I feel, an honest one."

Ruby smiled softly, but looked down. "But just a dream, I fear. I don't even have my aura, I'm nothing like the heroes in Yang's books."

"Do not sell yourself short, my dear." the huntress said, using a hand to raise Ruby's eyes to her own. As silver eyes met crystal green, she continued. "I see in you all the qualities of greatness. Your soul shines as brightly as the midday sun, and I believe that when the time comes, that light of yours will inspire all that see it, so long as their eyes are not blinded by hatred or regret."

"tha...Thanks" Ruby said. The woman stood up, and Ruby find herself joining her on her own feet.

The huntress studied Ruby for a second, and nodding her head, spoke again."I must be off i'm afraid, but in parting, I'll leave you two gifts." The huntress placed her hand on Ruby's chest.

"The soul of a huntress is a bright star in the dark night. It gives solace to the needy, protection for the weak, a salve for the wounded, and emboldens the hopes of the people. It is a fire that burns away the evils that threaten the world. Go forth in it's radiance."

Ruby gasped as her reddish aura flared to life, enveloping her in its light.

"My...my aura! You unlocked it!"

"Indeed I have. Now for the second gift, a grander one yet, though one I believe you shall not abuse."

"What could be better than this?" Ruby said, at a loss.

The huntress placed her hand on Ruby's head. "A new way to see the world, and a new power to help bring it peace". The huntresses' hand glowed, and brilliant light filled Ruby's vision. As the light faded back, the huntress looked upon Ruby with a pleased expression.

Ruby blinked as her vision returned to normal "So what did that one do? Nothing seems to be different."

"Like fruit, this one will take time to grow and ripen, but trust me when I say it will change both you life, and the lives of those around you."

Ruby blinked in confusion as the huntress begin motion to leave, only to be stopped by the sound
"Oh yeah, I never introduced myself! My Name is Ruby Rose! What's yours?"

The huntress stopped, and faced Ruby. "My name is Dwayna." she said with a smile.

"That's a pretty name. Thank you for all you have done! And that staff looks awesome, did you make it yourself? Oh, and I love your wings, are you a Faunus?"

Dwayna laughed. "Your welcome, yes, and something like that. Farewell Ruby. And remember, use what you have been given in pursuit of your dream, and be the light I know you can be. And I love your cloak, by the way." She added with a wink.

"Thanks, it was a gift from my mom. I'll do my best, I promise!"

"That is all I ask."

A shout came from the house, drawing Ruby's attention. 'Ruby! Where are you? It's getting late, you should come inside.'

"I'm over here Dad. I was just talking to.." Ruby turned, but there was no sign of the huntress.

"Talking to who?" said Taiyang, who had by this time joined her outside.

"Huh, she's gone." Ruby said, confusion upon her face, till it was replaced by excitement. "But you'll never believe what just happened!"

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When Ruby Rose had started her evening, she never expected to find herself in the middle of a dust store robbery, let alone stopping said robbery, chasing down a wanted criminal mastermind, and doing battle against an unknown huntress alongside another professional huntress as said criminal escaped.

Had her evening ended there, Ruby would have considered it an evening worth bragging about. Luck as it were, it hadn't ended, and she found herself whisked down to the police station to make a statement, and be interrogated by a certain Glynda Goodwitch. It hadn't gone as expected ether, something of a trend for the night. By the end, she'd met with Professor Ozpin, and to her infinite delight, had been extended an offer she couldn't refuse, in a good way.

Outside at last, Ruby danced for joy. Beacon! And two years early at that! All it took was stopping a robbery, and she didn't even have to make use of her special skill set. "Not to mention, I got another set of autographs! Collection almost completed!" Ruby exclaimed out loud. Ruby carefully stowed her weapon, put on her helmet, and sat down upon Hummingbird, her modest yet awesome, as she was inclined to describe it, motor scooter. As she started the ignition, she finally responded to her waiting messages.

[Yang: So how did it go? Are you in trouble? Answer, sis!].
Ruby replied immediately, [Ruby: Everything is fine! More than fine really! Awesomely fine! I’ve got big news when I get home. Meet me at the Ferry dock?]. She replied before mounting up and heading in the direction of the docks.

[Yang: Sounds good on the docks, but did you tell them anything about you know what? You didn't show it off during the fight, right?]

[Ruby: Everything is cool, I didn't show off any of THAT. Just used normal skills against some sort of crooks]. Ruby felt bad not saying who she had been fighting, or more chasing off, but felt the news she had encountered a notorious criminal would be be better spoken face to face.

[Yang: That's a relief, now hurry home, I can't wait to hear this news of yours!]. Ruby smiled as he gunned the engine, "Yang is so gonna flip when she hears this!" Ruby said aloud to herself, racing toward the dock as fast as her scooter would allow.

On board their personal bullhead, Ozpin and Glynda were reviewing the nights events again. "Skilled as she is, are you sure she's ready for this, headmaster? This is a huge leap from what students are expected to do at Signal" begin Glynda, concern obvious to any listening.

"She'll be fine, she's her parents daughter in all ways it seems. I did notice something odd tonight though, well, two things. Can you guess what i'm referring to?" Replied Ozpin, studying the video of the nights events once again.

Glynda thought for a second before replying, "She was holding back in that fight. I get the feeling that she was stopping herself from doing something, though I can't fathom what. As for the other thing, I'm not sure what you are referring to."

Ozpin nodded and continued, "Correct on the first point, Ms Rose was indeed holding back. Against the henchmen I can see, they appeared to be little more than common men. Against Torchwick however, she seemed to be doing all she could to avoid utilizing something. As for the other point of oddity, i was referring to her outfit."

Glynda raised an eyebrow to that, "It was well made for someone of her age. Quite durable looking at that, but an interest in tailoring isn't that strange for a youth, skilled construction aside".

"It was beyond mere durability, Glynda. Power coursed through it, albeit, just a bit of it."

Glynda was intrigued, "Dust woven perhaps? A rare skill for someone her age, though not uncommon among huntsman as a whole."

"Perhaps" continued Ozpin, "But I feel it's more than just that. If she made it herself, as she claims, then it's yet another reason to keep a close eye on Ms Rose and her career. The truth of it all, I feel, will reveal itself sooner or later."

Glynda nodded in response, and settled in for the remaining of the flight. She would have work to do upon her arrival, hastily preparing and filing the paperwork needed for Ms Rose's attendance.

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Ruby found herself being tackled by her big sister. They were on board a large airship bound for Beacon, filled with a variety of student huntsmen and huntresses.

"I can't believe my little sister is going to Beacon with me! This is the best day ever!" Exclaimed Yang, her sister in a vice like hug.

Ruby gasped, trying to free herself "Please stop sis!". Yang loosened the hug and continued "But I'm proud of you! Not everyone could do such a thing! And without, you know...You're awesome sis!"

"It was nothing Yang, really." Ruby replied, looking a bit down.

"If I had known beating up criminals would get one into Beacon earlier, I'd have thrashed that nightclub sooner."

"What, What? You said they started that!"

Yang quickly changed the subject. "This is your dream Ruby, aren't you excited? You did something incredible! Everyone will think you are the bees knees at Beacon!"

"Ruby sighed in response. "I don't want to be the bees knees, okay? I don't want to be any kind of knees! I just want to have normal girls knees, like a normal girl!"

"Hey, what's wrong with Bee's Knees! They are perfectly good knees!" stated one of the other passengers, in obvious annoyance.

"Nothing! They are perfectly good, working knees! Great knees in fact!" Ruby said frantically, waving her hands.

"Oh ignore her sis, Mellifera's sensitive about such things." Yang turned to the huntress in question, a friend of hers from Signal. "She meant nothing by it Mel, you know that."

The bee faunus shook her head. "I've got my eyes on you, Rose" she said, staring down at Ruby and pointing at the young girl with her antennae. Ruby could only sweat drop in response.

"Anyways" Said Yang, returning to the topic at hand "You have every right to be excited, and you should be."

Ruby sighed, "I am excited sis, I jumped forward two years! I just don't want people to think I'm special or anything. I'm going to have a hard enough time as is without any added weight from that."

Yang enveloped her sister in a one armed hug. "But you are special Ruby, heck, you are probably the most remarkable student here, for reasons we both know."

"I'm still not sure how I'm going to deal with that for four years. "Said Ruby, doubt written on her face.

"We talked about that last night Ruby, stick to the rules Dad and Uncle Qrow gave us and everything should be okay." Yang said, concern for her sister obvious to all.
Ruby quietly recited the rules from memory, "No using it in class, nor on people if you can help it, but Grimm are fair game. Avoid exposure to the mass public. No invites unless it's life or death."

Yang nodded in approval.

The girls introspective was broken up by the appearance of a holographic woman on one of the aircraft's screens.

"Hello and welcome to Beacon!" the hologram began. "Who's that?" Said Yang, curiosity apparent. The message continued, "My name is Glynda Goodwitch." "Oh, the girl from last night right?" Yang said. Ruby again nodded her head.

The hologram spoke on, "You are among a privileged few who have received the honor of being selected to attend this prestigious academy! Our world is experiencing an incredible time of peace, and as future Huntsmen and Huntresses, it is your duty to uphold it. You have demonstrated the courage needed for such a task, and now it is our turn to provide you with the knowledge and the training to protect our world." The hologram blinked out of existence.

"I see what you meant about the eyes, Ruby" said Yang, recalling the woman's appearance. "She's much scarier in person, trust me." Ruby started, before a look of wonder appeared on her face. "Look Yang, you can see Signal from up here! I guess home isn't too far after all!"

Yang joined her sister in gazing out the window. "Beacon's our home now sis. Though, I don't think everyone appreciates the view" Yang continued, turning her eyes to, and upturning her nose at the site of a poor student hunched over, trying not to lose too much of his lunch on his race to the back of the aircraft.

"Well, it was a touching moment while it lasted" Said Ruby, though the wonder hadn't fully vanished from her eyes.

As Beacon came into full view, Ruby continued "I wonder what are fellow students will be like. And well, I really hope I don't weird them out too much. I miss my friends back home already".

"Don't worry sis, they can't be much worse then vomit boy back there." Yang stated, quite sure of her assessment.

"I hope not, I'm not sure you could deal with everyone throwing up on your shoes like that". Ruby said, edging away from her sister.

"What are you talking about...oh sick! Gross gross gross.." said Yang, finally noting the sick on her boots.

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craft and onto the campus proper. The sisters took in the site before them with a not so subtle "Wow!".

Beacon Academy, Vale's premier school for Huntsmen and Huntresses alike. The cream of the crop, the tip of the top, the other things that mean great, as Ruby would say. Yang was taken back by the size of scope of the school, with its towering architecture, and it's even more towering central Tower. Ruby was more interested in the variety of weapons the students had on display.

"Look Yang, she's got a Fire Sword! Oh, oh, He's got a collapsible staff. And that guys got a, well, i'm not sure what the heck that is, but it's awesome!" Ruby Looked like a kid in a candy store, provided that candy killed grimm and looked awesome, which given Vale, was a not something unheard of.

Yang reached out to stop Ruby as she started to drift away to get a closer look at the students and their weapons. "Alright sis, that's enough. I know your a weapons geek and all, but they are just weapons."

"Just weapons, just weapons!? They are extensions of who we are! Cool, deadly, and awesome!" said Ruby, aghast at Yang's insult.

"Well yeah, but you have like, a dozen weapons. And compared to ours, they are pretty mundane" Yang said, clearly not finding the topic of student weapons all that interesting.

"Still, seeing new weapons is like meeting new people, everyone has a story. Heck, it's better than meeting people." Ruby declared, sounding quite certain of her remarks.

Yang playfully pulled her sisters hood over her head. "Now now little sis, you shouldn't be too hard on people. In fact, you should go try and make some new friends of your own."

"But I don't need new friends, I've got you, Yang." Ruby topped it off by giving Yang her sad puppy eyes.

"Yeah, well you do but.." started Yang before being mobbed by her friends, who proceeded to drag her off down the road, "Looks like my friends are here now, see you later Ruby, good luck! Bye Sis!" As Yang vanished down the road, Ruby recorded from the sudden vanishing of her sister.

"Wait, where are you going?! Are we supposed to go to our dorms? Where are our dorms? Do we have dorms? You'd think they would have given us a map."

[I'm so going to get you for this Yang! Yang!]

No reply forthcoming, Ruby took in her surroundings as best she could. New school, tons of new weapons, so many professions, it was a madhouse for her. She took a step back to think, and crashed right into a luggage cart.

What followed was an explosion of luggage, followed by an explosive outburst by the white haired teen pushing said luggage, a few muttered apologies, and then finally an actual sneeze ignited dust explosion.

"Way to start the day off with a bang" Ruby thought to herself.

The outburst triggered yet another outburst from the white haired youth, in the form of a lecture
and insult to her youth and ability, drawing a rare sign of annoyance from the hooded young youth. Salvation had come in the form of a raven haired girl with sharp yellow eyes who proceeded to identify the white haired youth as "Weiss Schnee, heiress of the Schnee Dust company".

Said Raven haired youth, who in Ruby's opinion had a very cute bow in her hair, proceeded to then criticize said SDC, drawing sputtered words of indignation from Weiss, who stormed off afterwards.

"I'll make this up to you, I promise!" Ruby called after Weiss, still sorry about the whole mishap. She turned to thank the other girl, but found only air, the girl having resumed her walk down the road. Ruby collapsed down to the ground, in defeat.

"Welcome to Beacon, Ruby Rose" Ruby said to herself.

"Cute name, mine's Jaune, nice to meet you" said a now familiar yellow haired youth, reaching out his hand. Ruby took the offered hand, and examined the boy as she was helped up.

"Oh hey, aren't you the one who lost their breakfast on the airship?"

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The young man, Jaune as she had learned, was of particular interest to Ruby. As they walked and talked, He noticed she seemed to be eyeing him with unusual focus.

"Do I still have some on my face? I thought I got it all off.." he said, reaching again for his handkerchief.

"No no, you'll all good there. It's just, your a huntsman student, right?"

Jaune appeared to be a bit shook by this "Well yeah, I'm here aren't I?" he said, scratching the back of his head.

Ruby continued her line of thought, "And you have a weapon, right?"

"Sure do! It's a family heirloom, but it still works." Jaune said taking out his sword and shield turned scabbard. "How about yours?"

Ruby's train of thought was derailed by a chance to show off her own weapon. "This here is Crescent Rose! It's a scythe, and It's also a customizable high-impact sniper rifle! I may have went overboard designing it"

Jaune was clearly impressed, "Whoa, you made that? That's cool!".

"Everyone at Signal does, It's a requirement. I also made the outfit i'm wearing." Ruby explained, doing a brief twirl, "Though that was more due to my, ah, hobby."

"Impressive on both fronts" said Jaune.
Realizing she was showing off her dress to a boy she hardly knew, she quickly changed the subject. "So, why did you help me out back there?"

"Why wouldn't I? "My mom always says, 'Strangers are just friends you haven't met yet.'" Jaune replied with a shrug, keeping pace as Ruby resumed walking. "By the way Ruby, where are we going?"

Ruby stopped, " I was kind of following you. Anything look familiar?".

Jaune looked around, examining the landscape, "I think that's Beacon over there."

Ruby laughed, "So that's a no then?".

"Yeah, That's a no."

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A short while later, the intrepid duo at last arrived at Beacon's great hall, finding it full of students milling around.

Ruby winced, "Information overload" she thought as she observed the gather masses.

"Ruby! Over here! I saved you a spot! " shouted Yang, waving to get her sister's attention.

Giving one last review of the blonde beside her, Ruby said her goodbyes, and made her way to her sister, leaving the suddenly dejected youth behind.

"Hey, wait!", Jaune cried out with a sigh, to no avail. "Ah, great. Where am I supposed to find another nice, quirky girl with surprising talents to talk to?!" Jaune shook his head and move into the crowd. Behind Him, a certain redheaded girl's head perked up, but otherwise didn't move from her spot in the hall.

"So how's it yanging sis?" Yang said, with a chuckle at her own joke.

Ruby shook her head before responding in deadpan "You mean since you ditched me and I exploded? And ignored my messages?"

"Yikes, sarcasm. Having a meltdown already sis?" Yang responded, a smile on her face.

"No, I mean literally exploded. There was fire, some ice I think, and a crabby girl, luggage, and words Yang. Angry words. Angry words yelled at me! I said I was sorry but they just. Kept. Coming!" clarified Ruby, hands in the air in exasperation.

"So like back home after a farming excursion?"

"More angry and less cookies waiting for us"

Any further sisterly interrogation was interrupted by the sound of a loud "You!" piercing the air
from behind Ruby. Ruby leaped into her sisters arms with a startled cry of, "Not again! I hate this metaevent!"

Yang looked at her sister and commented "You can face down a pack of Beowolves with a smile and a laugh, but this frightens you? Really?" Yang adjusted her grip on her sister. "Though I have to admit, those heels of hers are kind of frightening"

"Hmm, I'll have you know they are actually quite comfortable." Said Weiss, defending the honor of her footwear.

"I doubt that" replied Ruby, now noticing the footwear herself.

"My choice in shoes aside, you could have gotten us killed earlier! You're lucky we weren't blown off the side of the cliff!" Shouted Weiss, getting in closer to Ruby and Yang.

"Holy crap, you actually exploded?!" Yang said, looking to her sister for confirmation.

"It was an accident!" proclaimed Ruby, getting down from her sisters arms. "I mean, I sneezed, it went kaboom, and i'm still so very sorry about it".

"Your sneezes explode now sis? That's a new skill." Yang mentally filed that factoid away.

"It's not a new skill! Her luggage was leaking dust and it got all over me and …" Ruby's explanation was cut short by a pamphlet being thrust into her face. "DUST for dummies and other Inadequate Individuals" It read. "What's this for?" asked a confused Ruby.

Her answer came in the form of a long winded and quite rapid legal disclaimer from Weiss.

"You think her lips ever catch on fire when she takes that fast?" whispered Yang, somewhat in awe at the rapid speech.

"Funny blondie. And only a few times" responded Weiss.

"So ah, legal issues aside, the pamphlet?" said Ruby, pointing to the aforementioned item.

"You really want to make this up to me?" asked Weiss. Ruby enthusiastically nodded.

"Then read this, and never talk to me again." "Now now," said Yang, seeing the dejected look on her sisters face,

"I think you both just got off on the wrong foot here. How about we just start over, and you two be friends, okay?".

Ruby nodded as she put the pamphlet away and brushed herself off. "Great idea, Yang!" said an enthusiastic Ruby, "Hello Weiss! I'm Ruby! Lets hang out, we could talk about weapons and crafting and school and killing monsters!".

Weiss was a bit taken back. "Crafting, crafting what? And monster slaying, is that what you do for fun?"

"Oh you know, weapons, outfits, miscellaneous other stuff. As for grimm slaying, it's a hobby I suppose." Ruby smiled, convinced she was on the friend making path now. Yang on the other
"Quite the deadly hobby. Not the outfit making thing though, that's actually kind of impressive. I figured you'd more be the type to talk about nail painting or boys, like Tall blonde and lanky over there." Weiss motioned to Jaune, who stood a few meters away.

"Like Jaune? He's cool I guess. He's got an heirloom sword, it's pretty cool if you like the classics". Jaune's ears perked up at the mention of him, and he found himself standing a bit more proudly at his praise.

"Oh please" Weiss said, "He's probably the type to wear footie pajamas at his age. Totally uncool."

"That would be pretty lame, sis" agreed Yang.

Jaune was a bit less proud of things now, and mentally noted to change his sleepwear choices while at Beacon.

"Oh, okay, Well what about that guy over there? You know, with the black hair and the pink highlight" Ruby began, before getting cut off by Weiss, yet again

Weiss shook her head, trying to clear her thought. "Wait a sec, this is so not happening. We are not talking about boys, or weapons or anything!"

"Really?" came Ruby's timid reply.

"Really" clarified Weiss.

"Oh".

The assembled students attention was then drawn to the stage, where Ozpin and Glynda were readying the microphone to speak.

Given it's, well, less than inspiring nature, Yang gave her sister a nudge. [Yang: So that's the headmaster eh? He and the woman next to him where the ones who interrogated you the other night, correct?]

[Ruby: Yeah. They had cookies though, which was nice.]

Yang eyed Glynda. [Yang: Certainly a high level beauty there. Common profession though.]

[Ruby: They are both high level sis. I mean, they are professors. Still wondering what the deal with his profession is, though.]

Yang shrugged. [Yang: I suppose we may find out during our stay here. Still a lot we don't know about all this].

Ruby nodded in agreement.
"Do you two always just sort of stare blankly and gesture to each other?" Inquired Weiss.

Ruby let out a non convincing laugh. "It's kind of a sisterly thing"

"Somehow I doubt that"

"I don't know" added Jaune "Mine do similar stuff all the time."

Weiss glared at Jaune.

"I'll just go back over here then" he said, retreating.

"A wise decision."


As night fell over the academy, the freshmen students gathered in the great hall, which was now covered in sleeping bags and pajama clad youths. Ruby is relaxed on her bag, writing in a journal and looking out over the students.

Yang plopped down beside her sister, both girls clad in their sleep wear.

"So whatcha writing Sis?"

Ruby looked up from the page "two things. First thing is a letter for all my friends back in signal, I promised I'd tell them what Beacon was like.

"And the other?"

"Trying to spot any new professions. Seeing a few more of the rare ones here than in Signal."

Yang ruffled her sisters hair. "Relax sis, enjoy the slumber party!" Yang eyed some buff boys near by. "I know I am".

Jaune walked by the girls and waved, clad in what looked like workout shorts and a tank top. They waved back before returning to their conversation.

"Hmm, he cleans up nice."

"He's...a unique one, Yang" Ruby said, giving him one last look.

"He's OK I guess, hotter guys here though"

Ruby threw a pillow at her sister. "Yang! I'm not talking about what he's got, it's more what he lacks".

"You're going to have to be more specific than that, sis." Yang resisted the urge to list all she found lacking about him.
"I mean, well, You know what every huntsman has when you look at them in, well, our special way?"

"Yeah, go on"

"He's not got it. He's the only one here without it in fact."

Yang's eyes widened in surprise as she gave another look at him. "What the...how did I miss that? He's a huntsman with a weapon, right?"

"Yep, on both counts"

"That's...strange. Interesting, but strange."

"Goes to show that we still don't know a lot about this, despite the last year." Ruby put down her journal, doubting she'll get any more written tonight.

"We'll figure it out, that's what sisters and friends are for. Speaking of which, I see you are making progress on that front. Plus two already! Way to go sis."

"I doubt Weiss counts, she seems more annoyed by me than anything."

"Eh" said Yang, enveloping her sister in yet another hug, "She'll come around".

"I hope so."

Both girls noticed the lighting of a candle nearby.

"Oh hey, it's the girl from earlier!" said Ruby.

"From the explosion incident? Well now is the chance to thank her, lets go!" Yang said, dragging her sister up to her feet and walking over to the raven haired girl in question.

Blake's reading was interrupted by the not completely voluntary arrival of Yang and Ruby.

"Hello there! I do believe you and my sister are acquaintances?"

Blake gave the duo a once over, eyes fixating on Ruby. "Aren't you the girl that was blown up earlier?"

"The one and only! Or at least I hope so." Ruby's embarrassment was quite evident to any onlookers. "Name's Ruby Rose. Thanks for the help earlier."

Blake's attention returned to her novel. "Don't mention it. Really, don't."

Yang decided to throw her sister a bit of a line. "So...what's your name?"

Blake's irritation grew, not that the duo seemed to pick up on it. "Blake".

"Nice to meet you Blake! I'm Yang, Ruby's older sister. Love the bow and Pj's by the way, it's a killer look."
"Um, Thanks?"

Yang was floundering.

[I think this may be a lost cause sis…]

Sensing an opportunity, Ruby went in. "So what's it called? The book that is?"

Blake resigned herself to the conversation. "The man with two souls. It's...it's about a man with two souls, each fighting for control over his body"

The sisters looked at each other. "You know, I can so relate to how that feels"

"No Joke Ruby, that's basically life as we know it."

Blake's curiosity was peaked at that. Before she could inquire further, Ruby spoke up.

"I love to read, myself. I used to read all kinds of stories as a child. Stories of great heroes battling monsters, aiding those in distress. Tend to read a lot more scary stories these days though."

"Quite the abrupt shift there. Happily ever after to tales of horror and survival?"

"This is Remnant, one doesn't come without the other. It's our job to push back that darkness and do what we can to protect others. What power we are given should always be used to such an end".

"That's, actually quite admirable I suppose." replied Blake, wondering just what sort of girl she had before her.

[G1: Taiyang: Goodnight Girls! Get some sleep, tomorrow will be...eventful. And no, I won't give you any hints.]

[G1: Ruby: Spoilsport! Night Dad!]

[G1: Yang: Goodnight dad!]

Ruby and Yang nodded to themselves. "Well Blake, it's been fun, and a pleasure to meet you!"

"Yeah, what Ruby said" continued Yang. "Best be off to the sack, big day tomorrow after all. See ya around!"

Blake placed the book down and started to prepare her own sleeping bag. "You too, good luck tomorrow."

"Pfft, who needs luck with skills like ours, eh Sis?"

"Way to jinx us, Yang. Goodnight Blake!"

"Goodnight, Ruby, Yang."

As the sisterly duo walked off, Blake found herself thinking over the encounter. If this was the sort of huntresses Beacon had in store for her, it was bound to be an interesting four years. 
Blake put out the candle, and drifted off to sleep herself.
The Noble Roses: Chapter 2

The Noble Roses: Chapter 2

The sun rose over Beacon Academy to a rush of activity. In the great hall, freshman students were going about the morning, preparing themselves for what promised to be an exciting day.

Ruby Rose went through the usual morning motions. A quick trip to the restroom room to brush her teeth and to do some business. Next it was back to the ballroom, to wake up her sister, who was less than appreciative till she remembered where she was, followed by repacking her bedding and sleeping bag, and then a quick trip to the female locker room to get dressed and comb out her hair.

"What to wear, what to wear". Ruby decided to go with the same outfit she had worn the previous day, a black and red outfit with long sleeves, stalkings, and her favorite red hooded cloak. Ruby also selected the accessories she thought she'd need for the next days events. She strapped on her belt, magazine pouches, and storage pack. At last joined by Yang, who had by now gotten through her own morning routine, the two set off to the cafeteria to eat some breakfast.

Meals devoured, the sisterly duo headed off to perform, in Ruby's opinion, the most important task of the day: Weapons selection.

Along the way the sisters passed by an excitable sounding redhead and her companion, a less than excited sounding boy with black hair and a green outfit.

"Well those two sound excited about something. I wonder what their deal is?"

"Your guess is as good as mine. You sound chipper Ruby, looking forward to today?"

"How can I not be, Yang" said an enthusiastic Ruby. "It's time to get down to business, and business will be booming, if you catch my drift."

"No doubt about it, sis. What are you planning on bringing? I'm bringing the usual load out myself: Ember Celica, and the third year Signal set."

"Why change what's not broken I suppose, eh Yang? Still bummed I won't get a third year weapon myself, but I do love your new armored half-jacket though." Yang posed in appreciation. "I'm bringing my baby" Ruby patted her dear Crescent Rose, "and the new one I crafted last week." Ruby patted her storage pack to indicate the location of the second weapon.

"Oh? Not bringing along that drop from last month?"

"Shouldn't need it, I hope."

"Armory aside, what are you going to do on the subject of a team? If you plan to grow while you're here, you are going to have to get better at interacting with your fellow students."

Ruby was aghast, "I don't need others to grow, I am quite capable of that on my own. As for Teammates, I thought i'd be on your team."

Yang stroked her hair and looked away. "That would be fun, but maybe you should try hooking up
with another team? May help with your interpersonal skills."

"Hard to break out of a shell when you've had to keep big secrets for so long. Pulling every punch and not being able to talk with your friends about it is pretty rough you know."

"You know I do Ruby, i'm in the same boat myself. But that is going to change here, we can't keep this wrapped up for long, not when we'll be running external missions against Grimm."

"Doesn't mean I should be in a rush to do that though. Explaining this to two strangers will difficult as is with you by my side, I don't know how i'd deal with three. Not to mention the teachers."

"Not strangers Ruby, our partners, friends, and teammates. No matter what team we end up on, I'll be by your side when you have that conversation".

"Thanks Yang." Ruby gave her sister an appreciative hug. The sisters began to work their way out of the locker room, doing their best not to overhear too much of Jaune's conversation with Weiss and another girl with long red hair. Granted it was difficult to ignore Jaune after her flew through the air on the end of a spear, and found himself attached to a wall near the exit.

Thankfully, as Weiss and the girl passed, the girl paused to apologize and free Jaune from the wall, sending him slumping down to the ground.

"Having some trouble there, Lady Killer?" asked a smirked Yang as the sisters caught up to Jaune.

"I'm confused, where did I go wrong? I was confident, assertive, and Dad always says women look for that in a guy."

"Word of advice? Rethink your pet names." Yang said with a wink.

Ruby shook her head as she helped Jaune to his feet. "Alright, let's go Jaune, plenty of time to bandage your self esteem as we head to the cliffs".

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The assembled group of students lined up on individual silver platforms near the edge of Beacon Cliff, the sprawling Emerald Forest down below. Before them stood Professors Ozpin, ever present mug in hand and Professor Goodwitch, who was carrying a large tablet scroll.

It was Ozpin who spoke first. "For years, you have trained to become warriors, and today, your abilities will be evaluated in the Emerald Forest."

"Now, I'm sure many of you have heard rumors about the assignment of "teams." Well, allow us to put an end to your confusion. Each of you will be given teammates. Today." Added Glynda.

Ruby and Yang exchanged looks, as did many of the gathered students.

"These teammates will be with you for the rest of your time here at Beacon. So it is in your best interest to be paired with someone with whom you can work well. That being said, the first person
you make eye contact with after landing will be your partner for the next four years."

Ruby went wide eyed in terror.

[Ruby: you have got to be kidding me! It's up to chance?!!]

[Yang: Well this complicates things. Here's hoping luck is on our side.]

Ozpin continued, "After you've partnered up, make your way to the northern end of the forest. You will meet opposition along the way. Do not hesitate to destroy everything in your path... or you will die"

[Ruby: At least that part I'm confident in.]

Yang nodded in silent agreement. Jaune, nearby, was not so enthusiastic about the proposition.

"You will be monitored and graded through the duration of your initiation, but our instructors will not intervene. You will find an abandoned temple at the end of the path containing several relics. Each pair must choose one and return to the top of the cliff. We will regard that item, as well as your standing, and grade you appropriately. Are there any questions? Good!" Ozpin said, finally finished with the mission briefing, and clearly not interested in questions.

[Yang: so the teachers will be watching? Cat is definitely out of the big after this. Just remember not to fire off invites unless things get life or death on us. We'll contact Dad after the initiation as well.]

[Ruby: I'm so not ready for this. Well not the killing grimm part, that I'm ready for.]

[Yang: relax Ruby, I'm sure it will all turn out okay in the end. If not, at least we'll give them a hell of a show, right?]

[Ruby: YANG!]

Yang put on some sunglasses, and responded. [Yang: See you on the ground, Sis]

While the sisters exchanged their silent conversation, Jaune was frantically trying to get more information about landing strategies from Ozpin, with little luck. Yang and Ruby gave each other one last look and prepared themselves, shortly before being launched off the pads and into the air like the other students, including a screaming and none to confidant Jaune Arc.

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Flying through the air, Ruby cringed in embarrassment as she blew through a small black bird in a puff of feathers. "Birdie! No! But thanks for the pristine black feather!" She vowed to avenge the bird by killing some grimm in its name.

Ruby let off several shots from her weapon before shifting to scythe form to catch some trees to kill some speed as she made her way to the forest floor. All around the forest students were
making use of their own abilities to do the same, save for Yang, who seemed content to keep herself rocketing through the air on a northward trajectory.

Ruby hit the ground rolling, and quickly scanned to find her bearings.

"Lets see here, no immediate signs of Yang. Map time? Gah, of course it's not filled in yet. Well, plan 'B' then."

[Ruby: I'm on the ground Yang, where are you? Ping the map!]

Not seeing a reply, Ruby sighed, "Must still be falling, time to do this the old fashioned way I suppose". She set off northward, as fast as she could without using her semblance.

Mentally she ran though everyone she knew at Beacon, which currently amounted to just a handful of people. "Gotta find Yang! But what if she's taken? There always Jaune, but i'm not sure what's up with his lack of profession. Blake maybe? She's got an interesting one, and loves to read! I love to read, maybe we could share books? Mel? I don't think she likes me, and she didn't seem to be in this initiation group. Who else do I know? There's Yang, Blake, Jaune and…"

Seconds later Ruby entered a clearing and came face to face with another student,. As their eyes met, Weiss and Ruby exchanged a thousand emotions, or at least Ruby did. Weiss quickly turned and walked away, not even acknowledging the encounter.

"She...She ditched me?! My Partner hates me! Why, oh cruel luck, did you pair me with her!?"

Ruby threw her hands up, cursing the sky.

A few seconds later, Weiss returned, grabbed Ruby by her hood, and all but dragged her away. "Don't for a minute think this makes us friends." Stated Weiss, vice grip on Ruby.

"You came back! My luck rocks! Woo!"

Jaune looked down in dejection, still struggling in vain to free himself from tree, having been impaled on it by means of a javelin through his hoodie. "Great, there goes that fated partnership. Now who's going to get me down from this?"

Pyrrha walked into the clearing with Jaune, and looked up at his struggling form and spoke with "Jaune? Still have room on your team?"

"Funny, Pyrrha" Jaune said, before returning her smile. "We have to stop meeting like this, you know, I don't have many spare hoodies".

"I'm sorry!" replied Pyrrha, her smile not leaving her face.

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[Ruby: Partner get! How are things on your end, sis?]

Ruby sighed as no reply was forthcoming. "She must be busy still" Ruby thought to herself.
Weiss and Ruby trudged through the forest, with Weiss at point and Ruby starting to slag behind. 

"Hurry up! I'll not have my mission delayed due to a slowpoke! I swear, we'd be there by now if you'd stop wasting time picking every herb you come across, or slicing down saplings. Why are you even doing that anyways? This better not cost me grade wise."

"Sorry! It's just I've not seen some of these before, and they tend to be pretty useful. And for the record..." Ruby suddenly appeared before Weiss in a shower of red rose petals "I am definitely not a slowpoke."

Weiss was suddenly stuck with confused amazement. "What the, how did you..."

"I'm many things Weiss. I may be terrible dealing with people, but I'm an expert in killing Grimm." Ruby put an arm around Weiss's shoulder and continued. "You are definitely going to see a new side of me today, an awesome side that frankly is going to be quite confusing, and perhaps even a bit frightening. I promise I'll explain everything when the time comes. In the end you'll be like 'That Ruby girl is awesome, I want to hang out with her, and let her make me dresses and eat cookies with her..'"

"What do you mean by confusing and frightening?"

Ruby sighed and deployed Crescent Rose's scythe form. "Looks like you are about to find out."

"Why do you say that?" Weiss said, coming to a stop.

"Because we are surrounded." said Ruby, settling into a fighting stance as red eyes began to shine through the bushes around them, and a beowolf approached from behind.

"Oh". Weiss readied her own weapon for the coming fight.

"I hope you can fight as well as you can boast, Weiss." Ruby said, moving to stand back to back with Weiss.

"You can count on me. It's your skills I'm doubtful about."

"My skills are more than enough to handle small fry like this. I'll take the ones in front of me, you do the same for yours. This shouldn't be too hard."

"Sounds...sounds good" said Weiss, trying to recall her own training.

"Ok, Go!" Ruby shouted, shooting off toward her foes in a burst of rose petals.

Weiss wasted no time, parrying a wild swipe from a Beowulf while preparing her glyphs, Myrtenaster's cylinder spinning to call up a fire attack. The fight was frantic, but Weiss kept her cool, falling back on her training. She moved from target to target, cutting down groups of grimm with blasts of fire and lightning fast sword thrusts. Weiss spared a glance at Ruby's status. The clearing echoed with the sounds of gunshots and anguished cries of dying grimm, telltale signs of Ruby in action. Ruby moved from grimm to gimm, slicing off limbs and heads with recoil enhanced attacks from her scythe. So far it seemed to Weiss that Ruby was not doing anything out of the ordinary. Weiss returned her focus to her own grimm, dodging a lunging grimm with a graceful sidestep before cutting it down with a diagonal slash.
"Suffer!" came the sounds of Ruby's voice behind her, giving Weiss goosebumps as a cold wave of air blew past her. Weiss had no time to investigate, as the attacking grimm before her seemed taken back, showing signs of what looked like frost on their hides. Weiss capitalized on the momentary gap in the grimm's assault to quickly call up an ice attack, freezing them to the ground and making them easy targets to finish off. Weiss failed to notice the alpha Beowulf charging on her flank till it was nearly on top of her.

"Not good!" Weiss thought, trying to quickly summon a movement glyph to get out of the way. Before it could activate, Weiss saw what looked like faint, spectral scythes fly past, before massive versions of the same erupted from behind the alpha Beowulf, dragging it helplessly to a waiting Ruby rose, who bisected it with a slash of her scythe that left behind strange glowing trails of greenish black murkiness and scattering black rose petals. Green wisps of light were absorbed by Ruby and her weapon as the grimm took its last, surprised breath. "That was for you, obliterated black bird" said Ruby, looking toward the sky with a solemn look.

The battle over, Weiss took in what she had just seen, and replied the only way her mind would seemingly let her.

"What the hell was that?!"

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Some distance away, Yang was involved with her own fight against a pair of Ursa. All had been pretty chill, in Yang's opinion, until they made the mistake of tearing a single strand of her hair from her head.

Yang's semblance flared to life as she unloaded attack after attack on one of the Ursa in retaliation for their slight. Fire cloaked her in a moving circle before exploding, igniting the Ursa and leaving them reeling in pain. Focusing her sight on one of the grimm before her, she drew back a punch and struck a wild blow with such fury that the grimm was propelled backwards, colliding with the second grimm and slamming both into a large tree. Yang kicked up a sizable rock with one foot, and then shattered it with a punch, sending shock waves through the air and shards of razor sharp rock into the Ursa pair, shredding them.

As she caught her breath, cloaked in fire and adrenaline running high, Yang heard the sound of a breaking branch behind her. Yang quickly rotated around, weapons at the ready, and stopped as she found herself staring not at the expected grimm, but rather the sight of the girl she knew as Blake. Blake herself was wide eyed at the devastation Yang had brought down upon the grimm, and the surrounding woods.

Yang's eyes faded back to their usual lavender color, the flames vanishing, and she greeted her new partner.

"So, ah, Hello!"

"Um, Hi…" Blake was obviously a bit taken back by what she had seen.
"I suppose you have some questions then, eh?"

Blake could only nod in agreement.

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[Yang: Awesome Sis! Sorry for not responding, things got hairy. Who'd you end up with?]

[Ruby: Finally! And believe it or not, Weiss. You?]

[Yang: Blake! Can you believe it, me and book girl? Has your partner seen your little display of talent yet?]

[Ruby: Yeah a bit, not too sure how to explain it though. How about yours?]

[Yang: She caught the end of an Ursa fight. May have gone a bit overboard. Let's regroup at the objective, we'll see if we can talk a bit there.]

[Ruby: On my way!]

Ruby nodded to herself as walked around the clearing, stopping to touch the bodies of the grimm Weiss and her had killed just moments ago.

"Seriously, stop ignoring the question! What the heck did you do? And why do you keep touching those things?" said Weiss, all but stomping around.

"It's a bit hard to explain. Right now you could say I'm gathering some stuff from the dead grimm."

"What kind of 'stuff'?"

"Materials really, misc other things. I use it to make stuff." explained Ruby, finishing her task.

"As for the other stuff you saw, I suppose you could say it's a sort of ability of mine."

"Like your semblance?" inquires Weiss.

"No, that's separate. This is something I can do in addition to that. I'll tell you more once we link up with my sister at the forest temple."

Weiss sighed, obviously not pleased with the delay. "Fine fine, i'll hold you to it. Let's get going." Weiss began to walk off, only to be stopped by Ruby.

"Actually, I think it's this way. You're heading east, and the temple should be to the north."

"And how would you know?"

"I checked the map". 
Weiss crossed her arms at that. "What map? They didn't issue us any such thing."

Ruby rubbed her head with her hands. "It's, another thing that's hard to explain. Just trust me on this, Weiss."

"You seem to be keeping a lot of secrets for someone who claims I should trust her. Tell you what, explain the map thing, and I'll follow you."

Ruby thought for a second "Well it's sort of like...I mean...I'm honestly not sure how to explain this myself. Yang will be able to help me here, we just need to find her.'

Weiss shook her head "that's not good enough. So you say she'll have answers? Then fine, lets go get them” said Weiss, as she started to walk away.

"Wait that's...arrg!" Ruby said, following after Weiss and taking her frustrations out on a tree. Ruby zipped back to the fallen tree and quickly collected a log from it, placing it in her storage pack. "No use letting that go to waste".

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"So you think this is the place? Looks 'forest temple' like to me.” Yang said, walking into a large clearing alongside Blake. Before them was a large semicircular ruin, filled with pedestals, each holding an item.

"Probably. But back to my question, so the fire explosion thing isn't your semblance?" Blake and Yang walked toward the ruins, keeping an eye out for other students and grimm.

"Nah, it's a separate sort of thing. It's also less me exploding, and more me making a moving field of fire that explodes. It's damn handy. My sister will be able to explain better once she arrives" explained Yang, as the duo arrived and began examining the 'relics'.

"Looking forward to hearing that story. Huh, the relics are chess pieces." said Blake as she took a look at the oversized pieces serving as their objective. " And why would your sister be able to explain it better?"

"Ruby has similar skills. Er, or better to say related skills? It's all a bit complicated. Anyway, she's had them longer than I have. Hey look, a few of the pieces are missing, someone must have beat us here."

Blake shrugged. "I suppose we should pick one. "

"Oh! How about the horsey?" Said Yang, picking up a white knight piece Blake nodded in agreement.

"So all that's left is to link up with your sister and her partner, right?"

"That's right!" confirmed Yang. "Let me see where she is."
Blake looked confused at that. "How do you plan on doing that?"

"I'll explain later, but let's just say I'll send her a message of sorts"

"Like a flare? Our scrolls don't work here."

"More...complicated than that, hold on." Yang said, before seemingly staring off into space again.

[Yang: Got my relic! What's your ETA Ruby? I'll ping the maps location.]

[Ruby: right on top of you, be there in a second.]

Yang looked around, confused. "She says she's right on top of us, but I can't see her anywhere."

A scream pierced the air, drawing Yang's attention.

"Ruby? Certainly sounded like a girls scream at least. Maybe she's in trouble!"

Blake was wide eyed and staring up at the sky. "Oh, you could say that."

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"This is a stupid, terrible idea!" screamed Weiss.

"Hey, it was a shortcut! We're almost there, the temple is just below, we'll be fine!" Ruby cried out in response.

"Fine?! We're clinging to a Nevermore, hundreds of meters up! How do you plan on getting down?"

"Easy, we jump!" explained Ruby, eyes down, scanning for the right moment to release.

"Are you crazy?!" explained Weiss, not at all pleased with the plan.

"What's crazy about it? I mean, we started the day getting flung into the air, what's so different about this? Just remember landing strategy! Here we go!" Ruby released her grip and started to fall.

"Oh yeah, she's right." Weiss dropped as well, readying some gravity glyphs to slow her decent.

A combination of using her cloak as a makeshift parachute and recoil from her rifle was doing a good job at slowing Ruby down. Well, At least till she heard screams growing in intensity. She twisted just in time to see Jaune flying in an arc toward her.

"Jaune!" Ruby cried out, adjusting her trajectory to intercept.

"Why does this keep happening!?" Jaune screamed, not noticing Ruby, or much of anything at the moment.
"And...Gotcha!" Ruby said, snagging Jaune with one hand, and finding herself suddenly accelerating laterally.

"Ruby!?” Jaune said in surprise, he and Ruby spinning through the air like a set of bolas.

"Hold on, I'm going to try something." Ruby shifted her weapon to scythe form, just before the duo impacted a large forest tree. With one hand holding Jaune, and the other Crescent Rose, Ruby used the weapon as a hook flinging them around the tree several times, before firing off a shot to sever the tree in half, and launching them both back toward the forest temple. Ruby let go on Jaune and executed a splendid flip before landing with a slide, her scythe digging a gash in the ground behind her as she worked to break her momentum. Jaune was less graceful, sliding on his back toward the temple in a shower of sparks and aura, before crashing into a pedestal.

Weiss landed perfectly, stepping off one last glyph, sticking her own landing in a form that would make a gymnast proud.

"Jaune! You okay?" said Ruby, rushing the last few steps to the temple.

"Never better." Jaune said, groaning. "On the bright side, got my relic." Jaune held up a white rook piece.

"I suppose that's one way to make an entrance" Blake said, eyes wide in amazement and a bit of confusion.

"Yang! Blake! So glad to see you two. What Relic did you get?" Ruby said, rushing to give her sister a hug.

"Check it out, it's a horsey! " Yang said, holding her relic up.

"I think you mean Knight, thank you very much." corrected Weiss.

"Same difference. How you get up so high anyways?" Asked Yang, as Ruby separated herself and walked over to the pedestals, collecting a white knight piece for herself.

"Oh, we hitched a ride on a Nevermore" explained Ruby.

"You did what now?!" exclaimed Yang, eyes wide. "What if that thing comes back this way!?"

"Relax sis, If it comes around, we so can take one one Champion Nevermore with five people."

"Did you say Champion!?

Yang's outburst was cut off as a Ursa crashed out of the forest, before slumping over in a cloud of pink lightning and smoke, an orange haired huntress on it's back.

"Yee-haw!" she cried as the Ursa fell to the ground, lifeless. "Ah man, I broke it."

"Nora!" her male companion said. "Don't ever do something like that again." He turned to face her, finding her gone, the girl skipping merrily toward the temple ruins.

"Is grimm riding the new 'cool' thing or something?" Blake asked, taking in what she just saw.
"God I hope not, dad would kill us." replied Yang.

"Oh! This must be the place Ren. Lets see here.." Nora said, examining the chess pieces before her. She grabbed a white rook. "I'm queen of the castle!" she exclaimed, dancing around.

"Nora!" Ren cried, at last reaching the temple ruin, pausing to catch his breath.

"See Yang! Now we have seven people! That Nevermore is toast. Wait..seven?" Ruby turned to Jaune. "Do you have a partner yet? Oh, and check out his profession Yang!"

"Grats, loverboy. I wonder what changed?" Yang said, giving him a pat on the back.

"Profession? What are you talking about? And yes I have a partner." Jaune said, blushing a bit at Yang's casual contact.

"So where are they?" asked Ruby.

A piercing screech echoes through the clearing as Pyrrha broke the cover of the woods, a rampaging Deathstalker close behind her.

"Oh, there she is now." Jaune said, pointing to the fleeing huntress.

"Did she run all the way here with a Deathstalker on her?" Blake said, turning to Yang. "Are we the only pair that didn't bring a grimm along?"

Yang rubbed her temples with her hands. "Great, now we have two champion grimm. Go team."

"Technically still only one, the Nevermore hasn't circled back yet" corrected Ruby. "As soon as Pyrrha arrives, we can do something about that Deathstalker."

A large crack is heard as the Deathstalker at last connected a claw swipe to its prey, sending Pyrrha flying through the air and toward the temple.

"I've got you!" cried Jaune, moving to intercept his partner, who landed in his arms, driving the breath from him.

"My Hero!" Pyrrha said with a wink. Jaune smiled, in between wheezes.

"Ahem" said Weiss, looking at the pair. Realizing she was in effect in a princess carry, Pyrrha and Jaune blushed and Jaune lowered his partner back to her own feet.

"Well, the gang's all here. Now, anyone have a plan on how to leave here alive?" Yang said, polling the group.

"I'm on it, Weiss, with me, the rest of you: covering fire!" Ruby said, grabbing her partner and starting to run toward the Deathstalker.

"Well, you heard her, if you have ranged weapons, let them rip!" Said Yang, deploying her gauntlets. The others nodded, and then Pyrrha, Ren, Nora and Yang all opened up in the direction of the Deathstalker, careful to avoid hitting Weiss and Ruby. The Deathstalker paused in it's advance, using it's claws to try to block shots.
"Ok, so we are running toward the giant grimm. What's the plan?" Weiss asked, weapon at the ready.

"Remember what you did to the Beowolves before? We are going to put this Deathstalker on ice" Ruby said with a grin, before popping off a few shots with her weapon.

Weiss smiled 'With pleasure"

"Follow me in. Ready….Go!" Ruby zipped off with her semblance. The Ranged fire stopped just as Ruby and Weiss made the grimm. The Deathstalker noticed Ruby right as she closed to melee range, and swiped with its tail. Ruby dodged at the last second, lashing out with her scythe in an attack that left familiar green and black trails. Weiss exploited the momentary opening in the Deathstalkers defense to thrust myrtenaster into an ice glyph, freezing the Deathstalkers claw and tail to the ground in a large ice formation. Her work done Weiss started to retreat. Ruby looped back around the grimms side, and just before leaving close range, called down a swirling vortex of shadow that left the grimm blinded and crippled.

"What was that? You know, the more we fight together the more questions I have for you, Ruby."

"Just more to explain, but that nightfall won't last long. Let's get back to the others...crap, evasive action!" Ruby said, before feathers started the rain down on them. Weiss and Ruby zigzagged, Ruby with her speed and Weiss using her glyphs. The barrage stopped as the ranged attacker's fire drove the Nevermore off again.

Back at the temple at last, they regrouped with the others.

"Great job sis, Weiss, but that ice won't hold for long." stated Yang.

"And that Nevermore is circling back" added Ren.

"We have what we came for, there is no reason for further fighting." Weiss suggested, her eyes on the frozen grimm, which was struggling to break the ice. "Not to mention, you still owe me an explanation, Ruby"

"I have to agree, on both parts." added Blake.

"Yeah, I've got some questions too…” Nora said, looking between Ruby and the now dissipating vortex, a look of amazement on her face

"That will have to wait, retreat would seem to take priority now" Pyrrha added. .

"Run now, explain later, works for me!" Jaune said, others nodding in agreement.

"Alright, fall in folks, let's put this show on the road!" Yang said nodding to her partner.

"Head for the cover of the forest, and then the cliffs, lets go!" Ruby said, taking off in a run and motioning the others to follow. All did, with most having no shortage of questions on their mind and one with a wide smile.
The forest provided little cover as the group raced toward the presumed safety of beacon cliffs. Above them the breaks in the canopy provided glimpses of the Nevermore, still on the hunt for them. Behind them came the unmistakable sounds of crashing trees and inhuman scratches, sure signs that the Deathstalker had broken free and resumed its pursuit.

"This isn't looking good, it's only a matter of time before the Deathstalker makes us" Ren said, looking back to try to judge how much time they had.

"At least the Nevermore hasn't found us yet, though I don't think that will last ether." Blake added.

"We're almost there, I can see the tops of the cliffs ahead, as well as some kinds of Ruins? What's up with this forest and ruins, anyways?" said Jaune, who was keeping up with the group quite well.

The group reached the edge of the forest, only to see the Nevermore land in the ruins ahead, blocking their path. They hid behind some stone blocks to conceal themselves as they evaluated the situation.

"Well that's great, Looks like we won't get out of this without a fight after all. Champions to the front and rear, ideas anyone?" Yang said, stating the obvious.

Ruby took a breath. "Yang, answer a question for me: is this life or death?"

Yang's eyes went wide, "You can't mean…"

"Answer the question Sis, life or death?" Ruby's eyes were fixed on her sister.

The sounds of crashing trees grew closer. "I'm not sure what the heck you two are talking about here, but we are about to have company" commented Weiss.

Yang closed her eyes. "Yeah Ruby, it's life or death. Go for it."

"Well folks, you asked what was up with the stuff from before", said Ruby, waving her hands in front of her, as if navigating a menu. "Looks like you are about to find out."

"What do you mean by that…" Weiss said, before her thoughts came to a crashing halt.

In front of her, amazingly, floated a text box reading 'Ruby Rose has invited you to join The Noble Roses. Do you accept?' alongside two buttons of sorts, reading 'accept' and 'decline'.

"What is this?" asked Pyrrha seeing the same box in front of her.

"You can see it too?" asked Weiss.

"I think we all can." added Blake.

"It's a fighting chance. I'd accept if I was you." Yang said, eyes ahead on the Nevermore. She was removing Ember Celica, and replaced it with a set of brassy bands pulled from her waist pack. They deployed into a new set of gauntlets, brass colored with the emblem of Signal Academy
emblazoned on them. Next to her, Ruby had done the same, stowing Crescent Rose in favor of a new weapon, with powered black furniture and blue metallic parts.

"I'm not doing anything till you tell me what this is!" Weiss exclaim, though softly enough not to attract the nearby Nevermore.

"Oh wow, Ren you gotta see this." said Nora, eyes wide as she looked around.

"I agree with Nora, this is...I'm not sure how to describe it" added Pyrrha, holding her hands before her face.

"What are you talking about! What do you see?" Weiss said, turning to Pyrrha for an explanation.

"Weiss! Were are out of time, so just trust me here, ok? You asked me to prove to you why you should trust me, and this is what I'm offering. If we want to beat these things, this will help us." said Ruby, eyes on her partner.

The sounds of the Deathstalker grew closer, it was practically on top of them.

"Al...alright. But I better not regret this!" Weiss said, moving to press the accept button.

"I promise you won't" added Ruby.

Weiss took a breath and pressed. For a second, her aura glowed, and her vision blurred. Then it was over, and Weiss beheld a curious sight. There was a heads up display of sorts applied to her vision. The bottom of her vision was dominated by a large red circle, flanked to the left and right by square icons, five to each side, with four smaller icons above the ones on the left, each with a symbol showing a flame, rain, lightning, and cracked earth, respectively. To the left of this icon bar was a text box currently showing The Noble Roses [ROSE]: Message of the day: "Initiation time! Let's get to work!". On the middle/upper left hand side four small portraits, showing Ruby, Yang, Blake and herself, each with a small white symbol near each head, a small green bar below their picture and a listing of small icons to the right of their portrait. The far right of her vision had a textbox with the text 'Beacon initiation: Defeat the grimm and return the relic to the cliff tops." The upper right most of her vision held several small icons, the function of which she didn't immediately grasp.

Weiss was taken back, and looked around. Above each of the assembled huntsman and huntresses was their name in teal text, with [ROSE] beside their names. Weiss focused on her own partner, and to the top of her vision appeared Ruby's portrait in a small circle, with the same white emblem as with her picture on the left side of Weiss vision. It also listed Ruby' name "Ruby Rose [ROSE] and a number, as well as a green bar and below that, additional text reading 'Light from Shadows". The distant Nevermore was labeled in red text reading "Champion Nevermore".

"Wha..what in the world is this?"

"We don't have much time, but I'll say this for now: What i've done is unlocked something within you that is normally dormant: your profession. This lets you access skills you normally wouldn't be able to, extraordinary skills at that. Don't be shocked if you do something that seems fantastical or even magical, just roll with it for now, i'll explain more once we get out of this mess. The stuff you are seeing is something Yang and I call the UI, it shows your stats, as well as those for your fellow huntsmen and huntresses, as well as the grimm's status. Anything more will have to wait, as we are out of time."
At that moment, the Deathstalker burst through the trees behind them. "Oh crap, move!" shouted Jaune as the group broke cover, racing toward the ruins. The Nevermore instantly noticed them, and took flight.

"Anyone notice that Deathstalker is missing some of it's bar thingy?" said Pyrrha, sparing a glance behind her.

"Ruby and Weiss must have hurt it a bit earlier at the temple" responded Ren, eyes ahead. "Nora! Try to distract the Nevermore!"

"Right!" Nora stepped out from her own hiding spot, dodging a barrage of feathers hurled by the Nevermore, and launched several grenades at it, which exploding in clouds of lightning and pink dust. The Nevermore pulled back, abandoning the attack and moving to circle the group.

"Sweet, she left it bleeding!" said Yang, noting the Nevermore's condition.

The Deathstalker used this time to attack at Nora, but Blake and Ren interceded. As the two launched a cross slash attack, Blake's sword swings appeared to tear though reality and leave pink streaks and deep ruts in the Deathstalker's carapace. Ren's follow up bit deep with both weapons, leaving lime green trails and tearing into the armor still more and leaving the Deathstalker bleeding visibly from one set of it's eyes.

Ren's eyebrow raised. "Do your attacks normally do that?" eyes turned to Blake.

"No..that's new. Seems to be effective though" Blake replied, noticing the damage to the grimms armor.

The Deathstalker screeched in fury, lashing out wildly, but finding nothing to connect with as Blake, Ren and Nora dodged the blows and then resumed running toward the other members of the group.

Jaune cast a glance behind him, and noticed the Deathstalker had lost even more of its health bar. "Looks like they hurt it!"

Pyrrha spun around, shifting her weapon to rifle mode. "Well if they can, so can we!" Pyrrha said, before dropping to one knee and firing up several shots directly into the Deathstalker's broken armor. To her delight, the rounds bit deep, and the Deathstalker halted it's advance, screeching out in pain. Pyrrha returned to her feet, and nodding to Jaune, the two shifted directions, running toward the Deathstalker.

"Lets peel off this one, and leave the Nevermore to the others!" said Pyrrha as she ran at Jaune's side.

"Divide and conquer eh? Hope this works!" Jaune said as Blake raced by him. Blake nodded in understanding, and ran to regroup with Yang, Ruby and Weiss.

As the groups divided, they barely missed the Nevermore, who had covered the bridge between the group with a barrage of feathers before resuming it's circling.

Linking up with Nora and Ren, Jaune and Pyrrha find themselves attacking the Deathstalker as a group, firing shots at it's cracked armor and bloodied eyes, which had to their delight formed a
blind spot in the grimm's vision.

Nora laid into the Deathstalker with well placed grenades to it's good side, with Ren following up on the blind spot and the grimm's tail. Each shot from Ren appeared to hit harder when fired into the grimms flank and rear. Pyrrha arrived into melee range and deflected a wild pincer attack with her shield, following up with slashes from her weapon, now back in sword form. The slashes not only carved into the Deathstalkers left claw, they left visible lines of glowing red that to her amazement, exploded after a few seconds delay, causing the grimm to reel in surprise. The Deathstalker lashed out with it's other pincer, which Jaune met with his own shield. As Jaune parried the blow, his shield glowed brightly, before sending out a blast of light in a wedge shape that blinded the grimm momentary, and left phantasmal images of shields in front of Ren, Nora, Pyrrha and himself.

The group had no time to dwell on what just happened, as the Deathstalker once again lashed out in pain, swinging its tail at Ren. To his astonishment, instead of being thrown back by the force of it, the phantasmal shield took the blow for him, leaving Ren free to counter attack it's tail with a leaping slash followed by another burst of gunfire on it's flank. Pyrrha used the gap in the grimm's attention to shift her weapon into spear form, and trust it into the grimm's cracked armor, wrenching it upon like a lever.

The grimm recoiled in pain, and Nora charged in, shifting her weapon into hammer form, and delivering a crushing blow to it's blind spot. The blow left behind a ring of crackling electricity, which stunned the grimm momentary, and sent current racing though Nora, who found herself smiling at the rush of energy.

"It's working! Keep it up!" Jaune said, slashing out with his sword, which, to his continued amazement, cut deep and true, each slash leaving a streak of blue light. Pyrrha continued her attacks as well, delighted that the red lines appeared each time, forcing upon the grimm's claws and exposing it's weakness to the groups continued assault.

The Deathstalker lashed out at Pyrrha with it's tail, now pitted and marked with bullet holes from Ren's assaults. Pyrrha deflected the tail strike with her shield, and Jaune lashed out with another swipe with his sword, severing the golden stinger. The Deathstalker cowered once more, and Ren capitalized on this with another flanking barrage that left the grimm stunned.

Nora, her semblance fully charged from the effects of the electrical field she had previously laid down, looked ready to charge in for another go. Jaune took a look at the severed stinger, and the stunned Deathstalker and had an epiphany.

Jaune picked up the stinger and called out "Hey Nora! Batter up!"

Nora's eyes lit up as she wound up, planting her feet for a full powered swing of her hammer. Ren and Pyrrha attacked a claw each with fierce melee blows that left streaks of lime and lines of red, opening up the Deathstalkers front.

Jaune tossed the stinger in an underhanded toss, and Nora swung with all her semblance enhanced might, sending the stinger rocketing toward the grimm's rendered armor with streaks of pink lightning behind it. The stinger tore through the grimm like a bullet, exploding out the rear near the base of the grimm's tail, coming to a stop only after impacting a stone pylon some distance away in a shower of powdered stone.

The grimm collapsed like a puppet with its strings cut, its health bar gone. "I don't know quite how
we did that, but it was awesome!” cheered Jaune.

"Indeed, but it's not over yet, we still have the Nevermore to deal with" replied Ren.

The group turned to face the treat, finding Ruby, Yang, Weiss and Blake firing at the Nevermore from range, filling the sky with a variety dust powered rounds, as well as shards of ice and fire from glyphs.

"This isn't working! It's bar is still relatively full! And I can't believe I just said that!" said Weiss, as the group scattered, taking cover from another Nevermore barrage.

"Our attacks aren't doing much at this range, so long as it's flying, it's got the advantage.” added Blake.

"Then we'll just have to negate that advantage" Yang said, turning to Ruby.

"Yeah! Yang and Blake, get to high ground and try to force it down from above, once it's in range, Weiss and I will make sure it stays down!" Ruby shouted. Yang and Blake nodded, and started to make their way upwards, via ribbon and gauntlet blasts respectively.

"Hope this works" Blake thought to herself as she leaped off a pylon onto to a series of clones, and than onto the Nevermore. Blake ran the surface of the grimm wing to wing, carving into the Nevermore with a series of rapid slashes that distorted reality around her. As she reached the edge of the left wing, she leaped, firing her weapon as a hook at the last minute, causing her to hang from the wings tip. The Nevermore, unbalanced by the attack, veered toward Yang's position. Blake detached the ribbon at the last second, landing on a platform below, just as Yang launched herself at the Nevermore. Yang landed on its back, and fired a volley of blasts from her gauntlets at the right wing, causing the Nevermore to turn toward Ruby and Weiss, who were pelting it from below.

The Nevermore lined up on target, Yang switched to it's head, jumping onto it's neck and attacking it at point blank with a series of blows to the back of the head, forcing it's head down.. She stopped for a second, her eyes flashing to red, before pulling back for a punch that ground into the Nevermore's head in a blast of sound and fire, stunning the Nevermore and sending it into a dive.

The Nevermore seem to recover quickly and began to level off. "Oh no you don't!" Yang shouted, grabbing the Nevermore's head with both hands and rearing her head back. "For great Justice!" cried Yang, before headbutting the Nevermore with all her might.

Stars exploded in Yang's eyes, having stunned herself for a second. The effects on the Nevermore were more pronounced, the grimm's eyes glazed over, and it went into free fall. Yang shook the cobwebs out of her head just in time to blast herself off the Nevermore's back to safety an instant before it smashed into the ground, sliding toward Weiss and Ruby as the Nevermore spin around on it's chest uncontrollably.

"Your up!" Ruby shouted to Weiss, who zipped forward on a movement glyph as Ruby provided covering fire. She jumped off a snowflake shaped glyph and onto the Nevermore and launched a series of lightning fast attacks in random directions, leaving behind splashes of water, bursts of flame, shocks of lightning and shards of razor sharp rock.

She summed up an ice glyph just as she leaped off the Nevermore, trusting into the ground near it's head and freezing said head in a block of ice that adhered it to the stone below, it's feet pointing
toward Ruby. Weiss leaped off a series of glyphs to safety herself back toward Ruby. Ruby took this as her cue, and changing out her scythes magazine for one bearing the sign of gravity dust, she began her own attack run.

With blasts from her scythe at sent her rocketing forward, Ruby flew at the now helplessly thrashing grimm. She angled a shot as such that she popped up, flying now level with the grimm on a parallel course. "Nothing can save you!" Ruby shouted just before reaching melee range, and her form sudden cloaked itself in darkness. From head to toe, Ruby was shrouded in shadow and ethereal energy, black as darkest night, her scythe appearing larger and spectral itself. She spun into a horizontal corkscrew with a burst of black rose petals and green streaks, her scythe carving a series of gashes that glowed green and bit deep. Ruby at last reached the neck and hooked her scythe under the Nevermore's throat, its life bar nearly extinguished.

With one final blast from her weapon, she delivered the coup de grace, severing it's head in a flurry of black petals and green murky spectral energy, and leaving behind a field of frost in its wake that coated the bridge. Ruby fired one last blast from her scythe in mid air, correcting her course and sending her flying back toward Weiss, landing on the grimm once more. Yang and Blake had by this time made their way down to Weiss, the group watched as Ruby made her way back to them, and leaped off the twitching grimm, her visage like the Grim Reaper of myth, all that was clearly visible of Ruby being a set of glowing silver eyes. Blake and Weiss found themselves a bit shaken at the sight as Ruby took a few steps toward the group, their fear response involuntary, while Yang seemed to be only cheer and smiles. With a burst of petals, the shroud dissipated, leaving behind only a smiling Ruby rose, who quickly returned her weapon to gun form before stowing it in her holster.

The danger passed, Ren, Jaune, Pyrrha and Nora made their way to the assembled group of Yang, Blake, Weiss and Ruby, the last of which was ensnared in a massive sisterly hug.

"That was awesome Ruby! Way to go!" said Yang.

"It was a team effort, we couldn't have done it if everyone had not done their own part" replied Ruby, uncomfortable with taking all the credit and eager to give credit where it was due.

"Well yeah, we are all awesome, and you know what comes now right!?"

"The happy dance and loot?" replied a cheerful Ruby.

"Damn right!" replied Yang. The sisters engaged in a jumping high five that flowed seamlessly into a hip bump, before linking arms to dance around in a circle, to a bewildered audience.

"Alright, everyone alive? Good, so what in the hell was that!?" exclaimed Weiss, at last at the end of her patience.

The sisters ceased their dancing, and Ruby spoke "Well, first things first, Welcome to The Noble Roses, guildmates!" Yang and Ruby clapped, and surprising so did a few others.

"Um, glad to be here? I suppose?" said Blake. Several others nodded in sympathy.

"And second, it's just as I said, I unlocked something in your. Now, i'll explain more once we are out of here, and safely back in Beacon."

Jaune nodded in agreement. "Cool attacks and effects aside, and two grimm down, we are still in a
forest filled with them. We should complete the relic return as soon as possible and get out of here."

"But before that….it's my favorite part of a grimm hunt." said a smiling Yang.

"And just what would that be?" asked Weiss, hands on her hips.

"The loot!" came Yang's response.

"What loot?" asked Pyrrha.

"That loot!" said Ruby pointing behind the group.

The assembled students turned, and their jaws practically hit the floor. Before them stood a large, ornate treasure chest. "That wasn't there before, was it?" asked Ren.

"I think we would have noticed it, despite fighting for our lives and all" added Nora.

"Lets go! " said Ruby, as she and Yang raced toward it, before each placed a hand upon it causing it to open, before reaching inside.

"What you get sis, anything cool?" asked Yang

"Lets see, few mats, some lien, ahah! Check it out, new cloak!" boasted Ruby, pulling out a rather ornate hooded cloak, embroidered with images of the forest around it's hem.

"Nice Ruby! Looks like the usual for me, and hey sweet, new chest armor!." Yang said, pulling out a a duster, up armored with overlapping scales of crystal in places.

"That's awesome!" Ruby noted the confusion of the rest of the assembled group. "Well come on folks, what are you waiting for? I want to see what you gals and guys got as well!"

Blake shrugged and walked over, followed by the rest of the group.

"So how's this work" asked Nora.

"Basically, just reach in and start pulling stuff out. Each of you will get something no matter how much someone else takes out."

"That's convenient " stated Jaune.

"And impossible!" added Weiss.

"And yet your still going to reach in, aren't you?" teased Blake.

"Well yeah, impossible or not i'm not going to turn down a reward." came Weiss's reply.

One after another each of the group reached in, and pulled out what we can.

"Looks like I got a new circlet" Pyrrha said, admiring the piece of crystal headgear she received.

"Oh, gloves! Just my size at that!" Nora said, admiring the crystal reinforced leather gloves.
"Boots for me. Stylish at that." Blake said, inspecting the knee length boots she'd gotten.

"I guess this is chest armor? Where this stuff come from, anyways?" Jaune said, holding up a new set of armor plate. Unlike the other armor seen thus far, his appeared to be made from Grimm bone, with a black hoodie and light armor plate that appeared to be carved from grimm bone.

"Oh check it out ruby, he got the same set as we got last month! Must be a world drop or something," Yang said, inspecting Jaune's reward. "As for your question, we think it's some sort of reward incentive that comes along with guild membership. No idea who actually forges this stuff though."

"That's convenient. A bit concerning, but convenient." Pyrrha said.

"Looks like I got a new set of weapons" Ren said, as he held up a set of auto-pistols. They appeared to be blued metal with intricate details engraved and sported crystalline blades of emerald green. The grips were fairly standard, and the slide a bit more squared then his existing weapons. Otherwise, they were the same general form factor as his Stormflowers.

"I'm so jealous!" Ruby said, starry eyed at the sight of Ren's new weapons. "If that's what drops look like here, I'm so going to farm this place!"

"Looks like I got a weapon as well." Weiss said. Ruby's focus snapped to Weiss's new rapier. It had similar revolver elements to her myrtenaster, but like Ren's new weapon it had blued metal, and a long blade of the same emerald colored crystal. The prongs and hilt had a more rounded look to them.

"Yeah, so farming this place". Ruby said with a gleeful smile.

"I don't think this is a proper location for agriculture." Ren noted with a raised eyebrow.

Ruby frantically waved her hands/ "No no I didn't mean it like that. Remind me to give you all a breakdown on the lingo later."

"Also, what's all this random stuff? I got some claws and and vials of...I'm not sure what this is?" Blake said, holding up a vial of a strange looking green liquid.

"I think that's Deathstalker venom" Yang said "I got some too, it's useful stuff when it comes to crafting things." Blake raised an eyebrow at that. "We'll explain that later as well".

"Forget that, is this money real?" Nora said, holding up several lien cards.

"According to the bank, yes, yes it is." Ruby said. "It also drops from Grimm, by the way".

"Ok, it's official being in the guild rocks!" Nora exclaimed. "Wait did you say grimm?" Nora eyed the fallen Nevermore and Deathstalker.

"Yep. Be sure to loot those guys too, just sort of touch them and you'll get stuff.'

"So that explains why you touched the grimm earlier in the forest" Weiss said, understanding on her face.
"Yep, so now that everyone looted the chest, let's grab what we can off those two and get out of here." Ruby said and the group nodded and went off to gather what they could.

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Back on Beacon cliffs, Ozpin and Glynda started on their tablet scrolls, in a mix of shock and wonder.

"Well, it seems we have discovered what Ms Rose was holding back in her fight after the dust store robbery". Ozpin said, replaying some of the footage.

"And not just her it would seem, both assembled groups were pulling off attacks I've not seen before. If it was just one, I'd chalk it up to their semblance at work, but eight? And where were they pulling that...stuff from?"

"Only Ms Rose and Ms Xiao Long showed skills beyond the norm prior to arriving at the cliff side ruins. Whatever this is, it seem to apply to them only after that point. Also outside Ms Rose and Ms Xiao Long, the others didn't express nearly as much familiarity or power with their new skills. As for the equipment, I've no idea where that chest appeared from."

"What chest? The students looked like they were reaching into nothing from my perspective." Ozpin raised an eye to that.

"What on Remnant could this be then? Ms Rose's attacks were almost on the level of a maiden's at times, but nothing in our intel suggests Ruby has acquired any such power from a maiden."

Ozpin pulled up an image of a shroud clad Ruby Rose on his screen. "This isn't the power of any maiden, I know them better than anyone. This is...different."

"Should we pull the groups aside for interrogation then?" Glynda asked.

"No, unless they present a clear threat to the students, lets watch and see where this goes. I feel they will be more forthcoming with answers if we give them time. Nothing in the records from Signal we obtained for Ms Rose and Ms Xiao Long showed any disciplinary infractions of note, so I don't think there is an immediate danger. We have some other avenues we can explore as well before any major confrontation."

"You mean Taiyang and Qrow?" Glynda asked.

"Among other things, yes. We'll dig into the records of the other students as well, just in case there is some sign we have overlooked." Ozpin said, before returning his gaze to his scroll, replaying the events once more for review.

Glynda nodded, and made some notes on her tablet. Another busy night awaited her.

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Later that evening, after the last set of students had completed initiation, the students gathers back in Beacons great hall for the announcement of team assignments.

Following their cue, Jaune, Pyrrha, Ren and Nora walked on stage.

Ozpin began to speak, "Jaune Arc. Lie Ren. Pyrrha Nikos. Nora Valkyrie. The four of you retrieved the white rook pieces. From this day forward, you will work together as Team JNPR."

Nora embraced a blushing Ren, overjoyed to be on the same team as her longtime friend. Pyrrha and Jaune nodded to each other as well.

"Led by... Jaune Arc! " continued Ozpin, as the applause in the hall increased.

Jaune looked quite confused at this. "Congratulations, young man." Ozpin said, giving Jaune a nod of his head. Pyrrha gave Jaune a gentle one armed hug, "Congratulations, partner!" Jaune blushed as the newly minted JNPR was lead offstage.

Seeing their cue, Ruby, Yang, Weiss and Blake came onstage. They were curious to see if Ozpin would have anything to say about the afternoons events, but nothing came of it.

Ozpin continued his announcements, "And finally: Blake Belladonna. Ruby Rose. Weiss Schnee. Yang Xiao Long, the four of you retrieved the white knight pieces. From this day forward, you will work together as Team RWBY. Led by Ruby Rose!"

Ruby's eyes widened in shock, before being pulled into a crushing hug by her sister. Lake looked indifferent to the announcement, while Weiss looked a bit shocked by the turn of events, though she quickly put on a neutral face.

"We'll be watching your career with great interest, young ladies." said Ozpin.

The girls hardly heard him over the roar of the assembled students., but understood the nature of the statement, they were on his watch list.

Still, it was time to celebrate, and celebrate they would.

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After dorm assignments, teams RWBY and JNPR gathers in the as of yet undecorated RWBY dorm room. Ruby and Yang sat on one bed, while JNPR, as well as Weiss and Blake gathered around the others. All eyes were on the sisterly duo.

Nodding to Yang, Ruby took a breath and began. "Alright, before we start, let's make sure we have everyone set. Coffee?"

"Check, well, soda for Nora." Said Ren, pointing to the coffee machine and bottle of low caffeine
soda.

"Good good, snacks?"

"Right here!" Jaune said, holding up a basket of assorted goodies.

"Good, and save me some of those cookies. And last but not least, questions?"

"Oh you better believe that's a check. "Weiss said, holding up a notebook. Others had written down their own questions as well.

"Alright then guildmates. As your guildmaster, let me once again welcome you all to The Noble Roses!" Yang gave a hearty clap, and the rest followed with their own polite applause, save for Weiss, who clearly wanted Ruby to get on with things.

Ruby took a second to close her eyes and gather her thoughts. "It's time to tell you all what I've gotten you into."
"Alright everyone, give us just a few seconds to set this all up here." Ruby and Yang were busy setting up a small holoprojector with their scrolls. Yang fussed with her scroll a bit, "We made this back when we were trying to explain this to Dad and Uncle Qrow, so forgive us if it's a bit outdated, but it should still do nicely"

"Alright, this looks good, lets get started!" Ruby pressed a button on her scroll, and a slide appeared reading "The Guild, Professions, and You: A guide to the craziness that is now your life by Ruby and Yang"

Yang took a sip of coffee and spoke as the slides changed. "So this shows the organization of the guild. Admittedly, it's pretty simple". The slide listed it as 'Ruby Rose - Guildmaster - Everyone else - Guildmates'.

"That's a pretty flat organization you got there." Weiss said, dripping with sarcasm.

Ruby shrugged, "yeah, I've not really figured out how to do much with it yet, beyond create The Noble Roses, and the family guild our dad and uncle Qrow are in."

Ren spoke up, in between eating some chips "Oh, so you can have two guilds?"

Yang nodded "apparently you can have a lot of them. We use two so that Dad and Qrow can't read all our girl talk and such. We'll talk about chat and stuff later."

Ruby swiped on her scroll and advanced to the next slide. "Alright, so here is the big one: what guild membership actually does. As you can see, when you accept an invite, it awakens your profession, and all the super cool stuff that said profession does." The slide showed a crude drawing of Yang, looking sad before membership, and then smiling and covered in fire post membership.

"Love the artwork, reminds me of my little sisters." Jaune said, munching a cookie.

"I'll chose to take that as a compliment" Ruby said, advancing to the next slide. "OK so what is a profession you ask? It's the unique set of skills and abilities that being in a guild seems to awaken. As far as we can tell, every huntsman has one, it's just dormant. But once awoken, you start to be able to do a lot of really awesome things, all in addition to your normal semblance. We aren't sure why you get slotted into one or the other, we think it's based on personality, circumstances, semblance, and who knows what else."

Pyrrha nodded, "If it's not random, then I suppose that necessitates a guiding force is shaping this. Would also explain the creation of rewards and such. How did you gain this all to begin with?"

Ruby seemed excited by that question. "Oh, I think that slides next, let's see..." Ruby swiped on her scroll again, to a slide marked 'Origin story!'. "So that's young me there, and the pretty faunus lady there is Dwayna. She's the one who unlocked my aura as a child, and then gave me what she called a gift. I think that gift is what eventually awoke my profession, and let me create the guild'. On the slide were simple drawings of a young Ruby, and a winged blonde faunus. The slide also
contained an intricate and well-detailed picture of Dwayna's staff. Ruby's priorities were quite apparent.

Blake perked up at the mention of the faunus. "Have you seen that woman since? And what do you mean eventually?"

Ruby shook her head. "Sadly I've not seen her since, I've a ton of question for her if I do. As for the second part, It showed up gradually. The UI first, then the profession once I started at Signal Academy. I thought I was going crazy at first till the cool stuff started to happen, and no one believed me till I figured out how to invite Yang."

Yang put an arm around Ruby in a half hug. "Once I was in on it, me and Ruby really started to figure stuff out. We inviting dad and uncle Qrow pretty soon after, as they were starting to notice things. Dad created a lot of the rules about how and when we should utilize this stuff, which I'll get into in a bit.'

Ruby advanced slides. "So yeah, on a related note, you know how I said each profession was unique?" Various people in the group nodded. "This is an example. So this is how I see the UI, and this ' Ruby advanced a slide, 'is how Yang sees it. As you can see, the icons are different, as are the skills she and I use. But the general layout appears to be similar. Both have the aura meter, weapon skills to the left, other skills to the right, and the one immediately to the right of the aura meter appears to have similar functions for us, that is, it's a heal, or a skill that gives you a sudden boost of aura."

Ren's eyes lit up at that. "I can see such a thing being very handy in a fight." The others voiced their own agreements as well.

Yang nodded, "Yeah it's saved our butts a few times. There are a few other common skills, they seem to be based on where you are from or something, so Ruby, Dad and me share some, while uncle Qrow's are different."

"So, what exactly are skills? Is that how we did all that cool stuff from initiation?" Nora asked, mouth full of cookies.

"Wow, they ask questions in the same order Dad did." Yang nodded in agreement. Ruby switched slides. "Okay, so you were probably doing stuff from the left side, the weapons skills. You sort of pick up skills instinctively, and the UI keeps track of them as you do. The weapons ones come first, and then the other skills later as you get more familiar with the profession. But it seems that the UI isn't the be all end all of what you can actually do, it's more like, ah, training wheels. You can actually do a lot more than what it lists as skills. We aren't sure just what the limit is, it may be pretty well beyond anything we know so far."

Jaune looked intrigued by that. "So it's a tutorial in the form of a game? I guess that makes sense, you were young when you received it, so it may have been geared to let you learn and easily teach others."

"Wow, awesome! It took Yang and I a while to figure that out."

"Eh, It's similar to how my parents handled all my siblings. Turn chores into a game and it's easy to get kids to do something. Why not apply that to superpowers, I guess?"

Weiss sighed into her own coffee. "That's crazy, but I guess it makes logical sense in a way."
Ruby swiped again. "So about the UI, you can see it has a lot of info in it. Right here is your current level, a sort of measure of your total experience as a huntsman, and your profession, sort of mixed together. You get points for pretty much everything you do. One of the coolest things though is chat, the thing over here in the bottomish left. It's a form of text messaging that seems to show only to others 'playing'. It doesn't seem to have a range limit ether, uncle Qrow and Dad have sent messages from a long way away. It seems organized by channel, so you can talk to the guild as a whole, just your party, that is those folks you see on the left side of the UI, or to just one specific person."

Nora was intrigued. "Unlimited range communication? Do you think it piggy back's on the CCTS somehow?" Ruby and Yang shrugged.

"We don't know, and honestly, I'm not sure how we'd go about confirming that."

Blake took a sip. "So how does it work?" Ruby paused and looked at the assembled group.

[Ruby: it looks like this. You just sort of think of the channel, and what you want to say, then send it.]

Several of the group were startled by that. Weiss spoke first. "So that's what you two were doing during the speech by Ozpin on day one."

"And how you signaled Ruby during initiation" added Blake.

"Right on both counts" Yang said, thumbs up.

Jaune was confused "Does that mean my sisters are awoken to their professions as well?"

Weiss just stared at him in disbelief. "No, I'm pretty sure that's something different. Or at least I hope it is. Ruby?"

"No idea, I definitely didn't invite them."

[Nora: Boop!]

Ruby turned to Nora with a smile on her face. "Exactly! Wow, you got that fast. Everyone else give it a try."

[Jaune: testing…]

[Pyrrha: hello again!]

[Ren: this could be handy]

[Blake: hello?]

[Weiss: I can't believe I'm doing this.]

"Super awesome!" Ruby said with a cheer. "Ok, let's move on. This slide shows all the professions I know about thus far, mostly from observing students at Signal, and huntsman in Vale."
Pyrrha did a quick count. "I see twenty seven, with four labeled. Looks like the same symbols as what we see next to each other's pictures in the UI."

Yang gave a thumbs up. "Right on both counts Pmoney. Nine of those are the most common, and the other eighteen more rare. We think some of them may be variants on others, for example, me and uncle Qrow's appear pretty similar in places."

Ruby switched slides. "If you want to see the name for yours, press, or think about opening this icon here, it will show your 'hero pane' which has some cool info on it. If you could, open that, then introduce yourselves and tell me what your profession is."

'I'll start I guess, I'm Yang Xiao Long, I'm a Berserker'

"And I'm Ruby Rose, a Reaper."

"Cool, I can see a model of me on this. I'm Nora Valkyrie, says i'm a Scrapper. What are you, Ren?"

"Lie Ren, says I'm a Soulbeast."

"Jaune Arc, this says Firebrand. That sounds kind of cool."

"I'm next I suppose, I'm Pyrrha Nikos, Herald. It's nice to meet you all."

"The pleasure is all ours. I'm Weiss Schnee, it says I'm a Weaver? I hope that doesn't mean I attack by making cloth."

"Somehow I doubt that. I'm Blake Belladonna, and it says I'm a Chronomancer. Sounds like something to do with time maybe?"

Ren spoke next, "So I guess that means your father and uncle must be the Dragon Hunter and Spellbreaker the slide mentions?"

Ruby nodded. "Right on both counts."

Weiss rubbed her temples a bit. "Is there anyway to turn some of this off? All this info gives me a headache."

Ruby's eyes widened. "Actually yeah, you can hide the UI, just sort of think about hiding and it goes away. Doing that doesn't seem to affect your skills any, though you won't be able to see stuff like the map, or chat. As for turning everything off, I suppose you could leave the guild, but I don't know if that would revoke your profession or not, it's never been tried."

"And once you see what it all can do, I don't think anyone wants to be the first volunteer ether." added Yang.

"Wait, did you say map?" Weiss said, "Is that what you referred to during initiation?"

"Yeah, just think about this pane here, or show your minimap here, or just click here. It seems to only have details about where you have been through. Highlights some things though, like resources." Ruby said, pointing to various positions on the UI slide.
"Oh this will be helpful. I'm still getting used to getting around here." Jaune said.

Blake spoke, "Anything else of note about all this, it's a lot to take in"

Ruby put her fingers together shyly. "Well, there is one thing..

"Oh why do I get a bad feeling about this." said Weiss, her headache growing.

"Awakening your profession may have a few personality side effects."

"What sort of side effects?" Nora asked.

"Small stuff. For example, I took a sudden interest in horror books and comics and scary movies. I'm also not too bothered by dead stuff anymore. I'm still sad, just not as disturbed as I used to be. And sometimes, I get the feeling something watching me, but I can't see what."

"Probably due to your little minion things. Man those are creepy " added Yang.

"Do not besmirch my terrible, terrible babies. " Ruby said with a pout.

"Those things are terrifying sis. I'm still getting over what happened to Zwei. He's our pet dog, he actually ate one once."

"He's fine!"

"His eyes glow now, sis!"

"Only at night!"

Blake looked horrified at that tidbit.

"Anyways, side effects, yeah. Nothing really major, but don't be surprised if you take up new interests, or suddenly find yourself insightful about this or that, it's probably your profession affecting you, or trying to teach you something." Yang said while finishing off her coffee.

Ruby swallowed a cookie and spoke. "Beyond that, there isn't much we can tell you all. We don't know how any profession besides our own function, so we can't really help you with your skills. It's just going to take practice and training. But there are a few rules our Dad created I'd like you to follow as well."

Pyrrha took another sip. "And what would those be?"

"Mostly this: Keep this all quiet. Don't show off skills in front of other people if you can help it, which means no pulling off awesome superpower stuff in class, or against normal people if you can help it. Against the grimm you can take the kiddy gloves off though. But the fewer people who know, the fewer who start asking questions, and start trying to unlock this themselves."

"Yeah, imagine someone like Torchwick with this sort of skill set" Yang added.

"Or the white fang." added Weiss. Blake found herself gripping the sheets, but said nothing.

Jaune looked a bit pale, "Or what would happen if the council found out, You'd have every
huntsmen in Beacon and Vale knocking on your door"

"And if Vale had a legion of super powered huntsman, how would the other kingdoms react? It could start a war." Ren added, as Nora gripped his hand.

Ruby looked at the group with solemn expression. "So you see the point of the rule, right? We took a huge risk even inviting you all, and this is just something I'm afraid you'll have to keep in mind. It's possible to still use your normal fighting style and semblance, it just takes a bit of concentration. It's a lot like pulling a punch, it gets easier in time."

The group contemplated this, but one by one, they nodded in understanding. Pyrrha was the first to speak. "Keeping this quiet couldn't have been easy, between friends and spars."

"It really wasn't." Ruby sank into her sisters open arm. "But I had Yang to help, as well as Dad and Uncle Qrow. I suppose now though, we also have each other. I am sorry to burden you with this, but it is the cost for this power we were given, at least for now."

Jaune spoke up, "Speaking of spars and teachers, how in Remnant are we supposed to keep this quiet here? They must have seen what happened in the forest."

Yang and Ruby looked at each other. "Actually, we think at least the headmaster knows. He hinted that he's watching us when he read out our team assignment." Ruby said, "But I've no idea why he hasn't directly confronted us yet."

"He must be taking a wait and see, seeing if we are a threat or not. We need to be diligent on what we use the skills for, and where we show them." Blake said, seeking and finding consensus with the group.

"Not to mention, we have to use them to get better at them, according to Ruby and Yang." Pyrrha scratched her head, "Any ideas on how we go about that if we can't spar using them?"

"Well, we spoke to dad about this earlier, he suggests we be direct, and just ask for somewhere to practice out of the sight of the normal students. Apparently there is precedent for that." explained Yang, opening another bag of crackers.

Blake crossed her arms. "Makes sense, it's win win for the school. They would be able to monitor any training, gaining a clearer picture of what we can do, as well as ensuring no other students get caught in a crossfire"

Weiss seemed less convinced. "What makes you think the headmaster won't just report us to the council? I mean technically he's a part of it and all."

"Well" spoke Ruby, "According to Dad, the headmaster is good at keeping a secret, and tends to keep things close to hand. So long as we don't present a clear danger, Dad thinks he won't directly interfere, but warns us that a favor comes with a price, and Ozpin may one day come calling our way."

Ren seemed to accept this. "I suppose that's a price we'll just have to live with. When do you plan on asking about the training space?"

"We'll ask them tomorrow, if we get the chance. We were tempted to send a mail about it, but Uncle Qrow warned us this is better done face to face. The sooner we can start though, the sooner
you all can get a full grasp on what you can do."

Nora held up a vial of grimm venom. "Speaking of what we can do, what exactly is this stuff for?"

"Oh! Hey Ruby, do we have a slide for the tradeskills?"

"One sec, I think we do. Let see here…" Ruby looked around on her scroll. "Okay, here we go. See this pane here? Think about that one, and it will bring up the tradeskills. In effect, you can take on a trade skill, and gain the ability to make some stuff like armor, weapons, potions, jewelry, and such. These things are, well, enchanted and boost your stats. Those are the things you see on this pane over here" Ruby said, bringing up another slide. "

"So I take it your outfits and weapons are 'enchanted'? And those grimm things are what we use for that? Reminds me of dust alchemy and dust weaving. " Weiss said, taking a sip.

"That's how dad described it, yeah. Except the effects are much stronger. Hey Ruby do we have any examples of emblems and such handy?"

"In our bags, one sec." Ruby hopped off the bed and went to the delivered luggage, pulling out a large red cloth backpack overflowing with folded cloth, yarn, and related tailors tools, and searched through it.. She also brought out a large chest with an anvil and hammers attached to it, and reached inside for something as well, before returning to the bed, items in hand. Ruby handed some of them to Yang.

"Okay, so this is an emblem, it's the primary thing used to do the enchanting thing with armor, or in my case, tailored outfits. This here on the other hand, is a sigil, it's like the upgrade enchantment." Ruby held them up.

Yang held up hers. "And cylinder thing is an inscription it's the primary for a weapon, and this is a rune, it's upgrade component. You can kind of mix and match, but the primary is the more important to overall effect."

"There are also runes of holding, which are more used to do stuff with bags, making them hold more than normal without affecting weight, kind of like a dust enhanced magazine or mecha shift component. I don't have one of those handy though"

"Suffice to say, once Ruby and I figured these out, we spent a lot of time in the workshop at Signal, or working at the one we built at home. Ruby became a regular master with with a sewing machine as well. "

"It's kind of fun really. Oh, you can make jewelry,accessories and potions and such, but those require their own skills, and it seems you can only have two tradeskills at a time, so i'd suggest you divide the skills out among your team mates. Your profession should say what sort of armor it prefers as well, which helps figure out where to focus your efforts. Sadly there is no shortcut to this, you kind of have to put in the elbow grease and time. "

"Did you make the weapons you used during initiation?" asked Pyrrha, finishing off the last of her coffee.

"Well, Ruby made the one she used, but the one I used in the last fight was a rewards track weapon. If seem the tutorial system rewards you for stuff like classroom spars, tournaments, etc. Seems to be retroactive at that, you can check your progress in this pane here." Yang said, tapping
a few options on Ruby's scroll."

"That should be pretty handy for you, right Pyrrha?" Weiss said, turning to the red haired champion. Pyrrha's eyes widened as she looked at her pane.

"Oh, you could say that again. I'm going to have to examine this a bit closer, there is a lot here."

Jaune sighed and ate the last of his chips. "This is, well, a lot to take in at once. Probably best if we research a bit later and sleep on it before making any decisions."

"Well I think we have the general insanity of it down at least." added Weiss.

Pyrrha looked at the time on her scroll. "It's getting pretty late. We have class in the morning and still need to sort though our luggage for sleeping supplies, uniforms, and related."

Yang nodded. "Sounds like we should wrap up for now. We can always continue later, and we need to think of a way to get the headmaster to agree to the training request. Just be careful with spars or such until you get a firm grasp on how to hold back. I'd expect to lose a fight or two till you get the hang of it."

Jaune seemed a bit down at that. "Well, don't think that part will be a problem for me." Pyrrha patted his back in support.

Ruby clapped to get everyone's attention. "Alright guild, let's break for now, and get together again tomorrow night, or later if we have a lot of day one homework or something. Just be careful all, it's always hardest at the start, but it will get easier to manage in time. If you have any critical questions, feel free to send a guild chat about it."

Everyone got up, and said their good nights as team JNPR left and team RWBY began to go about their nightly routines.

"Hey Ruby, you have a second?" Weiss said, getting Ruby's attention.

"Whats up? Got more questions?"

"Well yeah, but that can wait." Weiss collected herself and continued, "This whole situation is crazy, and i'm not the easiest to get along with, but I think you did alright tonight. It's not easy hiding something like this, let alone teaching people. I think, at least for now, that I trust you know what you're doing. I'll give you the benefit of the doubt, so long as you don't hide anything else about this."

"Thanks Weiss, that actually means a lot to me."

"Anytime. Now, time to hide this thing for now, and try to forget my life is now a video game, at least for tonight. I'm not even very good at video games, you know?"

"Well, we can fix that too."

Weiss walked over to the backpack Ruby had previously searched though for an emblem, and ran her hands over one of the bolts of cloth spilling form it.

"This one."
"Something else on your mind?" asked Ruby.

"What sort of cloth is this one?"

"Oh, that's Valean cotton. Good stuff, easy to work with, the outfit I wore during initiation was made from it."

"Could...could you make something for me out of it?"

"I'd...I'd love to! I'll have to get your measurements and all, and pick a style, but it would be fun!"

"Thanks...partner" Weiss said, a smile on her face for the first time tonight.

"Anytime!" Ruby said, smiling as well.

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"So, what do you all think about this?" Jaune asked, as team JNPR reentered their personal dorm room. As he spoke the group moved to their respective luggage, looking for their night clothes and toiletries.

"It's...interesting, although I'm not comfortable having an unknown power thrust upon us. What we don't know may prove to be as dangerous as what we do at this point, which sadly, is not a whole lot" Ren said, laying aside his bedclothes.

"It's magic Ren! And money! I admit I'm confused about how all this works still, but Magic! Real honest magic!" Nora was visibly excited about the prospect before her as she jumped onto her bed.

Pyrrha removed her ever present circlet and let down her hair. "I have to agree with Ren, so long as we are in the dark about what we can do, I'm not sure how we can go about using this wisely. The sooner we can get some real practice under us, the less chance we will have of giving ourselves away or inadvertently hurting another student."

Jaune sighed, "Certainly going to make spars more difficult, not that I'm terribly great at those to begin with. At least this all comes with a tutorial, and I'm not too bad at games, what with my sisters an all. I'm not sure how I'd deal with this if it was pure trial and error."

Pyrrha laid out her nightgown and took out her own bath kit. "I have to agree with Ren, so long as we are in the dark about what we can do, I'm not sure how we can go about using this wisely. The sooner we can get some real practice under us, the less chance we will have of giving ourselves away or inadvertently hurting another student."

"I expect we'll be looking toward you for advice in those matters then" Ren said with a nod to Pyrrha, receiving a small smile in response.

"Thanks, though I'm not sure what sort of help that will be. I'm as in the dark about how the
profession side functions as anyone, save for Ruby and Yang. Not to mention, none of us know how our side effects will manifest as of yet."

"Come on guys, we are going to be fine. If I've learned anything growing up, it's that you don't let good opportunities pass by. We have these profession thingies, so let's use them. Well, responsibly of course, else Ren will get mad and take away pancake privileges again, and no one wants that, no sir."

Pyrrha and Jaune looked to Ren, who mouthed 'I'll explain later' to them.

"I think Nora has the right idea, or at least I think I think that she does?" Ren nodded in affirmation, as Nora was busy trying to find her toothbrush. "We take this one day at a time, and see what happens. I'll link up with Ruby tomorrow and see if we can't figure out the plan for getting our space, and then, well I guess we just farm grimm till we get a hang of the profession thing."

"Oh yeah, about that, what do you mean by farming grimm? You don't mean trying to raise them in captivity or something, right?" Ren asked, laying out his own kit.

"Oh, that's video game lingo. It means to kill a lot of monsters to gather items and experience points. Have you all not played video games before?"

Ren shook his head, "We didn't have access to those growing up." Nora nodded in agreement.

"I spent most of my time in training or competing, so I didn't have much a chance to play any ether" Pyrrha said.

"Well" Jaune said, feeling useful for a change, "At least that's one area my expertise may come in handy. If you have any questions, feel free to ask. Well then, I suppose we come to the nights big questions then."

Pyrrha looked a bit confused. "And what would those be?"

"Who gets the shower first, and how are we going to handle changing in a coed dorm room?"

The others paused at that. "It would be prudent to decide on that now and spare ourselves potential embarrassment." said Ren.

"Ladies first in the shower, and change there for now? At least until we can rig some sort of curtain or something."

Pyrrha nodded "That seems like a plan for now, Jaune. Nora, want to go first?"

"Sure! Well, as soon as I find mr squeaks. Can't have a shower without a rubber duck, after all."

Jaune and Pyrrha turned to Ren again, who only shook his head in response.

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While Ruby and Weiss were discussing their preferred combat skirt styles and Blake had gone off to take the teams first go at the shower, Yang laid in her bed, checking her scroll for any missed messages from her friends, and sending her own congratulations on team assignments. Her thoughts were interrupted by a different sort of message.

[Taiyang to Yang: So how did it go?]

[Yang to Taiyang: Well I think. We showed them the old slides, I think at least they have an idea what they are in for now]

[Taiyang to Yang: That's good to hear. What are your thoughts on your team and the other..JNPR right?]

[Yang to Taiyang: They seem nice enough, some good fighters as well. No real bad vibes so far.]

[Taiyang to Yang: A lot of trust is riding on them. I've some ideas on plausible deniability as well, look for some mail in the morning]

[Taiyang to Yang: You can't just tell me here?]

[Taiyang to Yang: It will be easier once you see it physically.]

[Taiyang to Yang: Cool, cool.]

[Taiyang to Yang: All's well then I suppose. Just remember to be careful at class tomorrow. I'll let you know if the headmaster send anything my way as well. Best not to be caught flat footed]

[Taiyang to Yang: Well that inspires confidence. We'll do our best, and I'll keep an eye on Ruby]

[Taiyang to Yang: *sniff* My little girls all grown up.]

[Taiyang to Yang: Dad!]

[Taiyang to Yang: I'm kidding, have a good night Yang.]

[Taiyang to Yang: You too! Goodnight!]

By this time, Blake had finished her own shower and returned to the room clad in her yukata. "It's all yours I guess, seeing as those two are preoccupied"

Yang sat up in bed and threw her legs off. "S'right! How you holding up, by the way?"

"About as well as expected. Not really sure how to react to gaining strange new abilities from a girl I hardly know." Blake said, moving to her own bed and reaching for one of her books.

"Eh, you'll get used to it. Honestly, it's pretty kickass, I think you'll like it."

"I'm...actually looking forward to seeing how this tale plays out. Certainly an interesting start to the year."

"Let's hope it's the most exciting thing we encounter. Can't wait to see you in action though, you
had some killer moves in initiation."

Blake blushed at that, quickly hiding her face behind the book. "Thanks, though I think you and Ruby stole the show there."

Yang flexed an arm. "Yeah, we are pretty awesome. Think you'll be able to handle the secrecy stuff?"

Blake turned a page. "Shouldn't be an issue, you'll find I'm quite adept at keeping a secret when needed."

"You know, for someone who likes books, you certainly aren't an easy read yourself."

"Who doesn't love a good mystery?" Blake said with a raised eyebrow.

"More an action gal myself. Anyways, shower calls!"

Blake gave Yang a quick nod of acknowledgement as Yang took up her bath kit and headed to the bathroom before returning her attention to her book.

Blake couldn't help but smile as she thought to herself. "If this is what forty eight hours at Beacon has brought me, then what's in store for the next four years?"
Weiss struggled to sleep, her dreams disturbed by the sounds of movement all around her. She did her best to ignore it and pretend to sleep. She was successful, for a time, only registering some of the voices she was hearing.

"..should really wake…"

"I'll handle it..."

"...not sure about this…."

"..will be fine.."

"What are they talking about?" Weiss thought, turning away from the noise and gripping her pillow. Weiss blissful world of sleep shattered at the sound of an obnoxiously loud whistle, from her equally as obnoxious team leader.

"Good Morning Team RWBY!"

Weiss flew off the bed, and called up a swirling cyclone of dust and rock instinctively, guarding against whatever attack her mind had convinced herself was coming. " I won't come undone!"

"Wow, that's awesome partner! How'd you do that?" Ruby's eyes looked almost sparkly.

"Do what now? What's, going on, and what in Remnant is wrong with you!?"

"It's morning silly, time for our first official team activity! As for the awesomeness, I'm talking about...well that' Ruby said pointing to Weiss's current condition. Weiss, the ringing in her ears clearing along with the fog in her mind, finally noticed her current state.

"I'm...not sure. I think I activated a skill or something?" Weiss confirmed her theory with a look at her UI, showing a new skill had indeed been added. "And activity, what activity?"

"Unpacking." Blake picked up her suitcase, spilling its contents on the floor." Oh, and cleaning up. I hope that dust and rock you...spawned doesn't need to be swept up later".

Yang put down the small anvil she had been carrying on one of the desks in the room. "Not to mention, we need to set up Ruby's tailoring supplies, and my own armorsmithing stuff, and general decorating."

Weiss was less than enthusiastic about the proposition, but admitted it would be nice to stop living of a suitcase. She relented, and started to get dressed. "I sure hope JNPR is having a better morning than I am."
Team JNPR, as it were, was also in the process of decorating their dorm room. Of the team, only Pyrrha had brought along any substantial amount of luggage, with Ren, Nora, and Jaune having only a few suitcases to their name. As a result, the process of unpacking had gone relatively easily. After stopping to grab a quick bite to eat, they had decided to spend the rest of the morning playing around with the UI.

Currently, they were exploring the rewards tracks for Pyrrha. That is to say, she was trying on the various outfits she'd been awarded for her many tournament wins, and the rest of the team was offering their opinions.

"Damn girl, black looks amazing on you. Which one is this?" Nora gave Pyrrha a thumbs up.

Pyrrha's latest outfit was a black ensemble. A black corset edged in gold and matching black neck armor on top, and black mini-skirt with several large pleats on the bottom. Her normal red sash had been replaced by a gold linked belt, with the sash hanging on the end of one hip. Thigh high stockings were protected with frontal plates of golden armor, and she wore similar black heeled boots to her normal huntress outfit. Long shoulder length gloves were on both arms, and her left forearm and hand were clad in golden plate armor.

"It's the 'Glorious Champion' set, a reward for my forth victory in the regional tournament. What do you think Jaune?"

Jaune was breathless. "Well, it's certainly eye catching that's to be sure. I think it looks good."

Pyrrha looked at herself in the mirror again, pausing to hold her hair up in an imitation ponytail. She spun around slowly, trying to see herself from at other angles.

"It does look pretty nice. Not sure if I'll wear this one over my normal outfit, although, the stats are much better on this."

Ren rubbed his chin. "I suppose that is a consideration we have to take into account now. On a related subject, any idea what crafting disciplines will you will be taking?"

"Well" Jaune began, tearing his eyes off his partner and turning to Ren. "I was thinking of taking armorsmithing, as Pyrrha and I are heavy armor professions, apparently."

Ren nodded. "That sounds quite practical, you could take one job and make armor for you and your partner. I was considering taking leatherworking myself, as Nora and I seem to share the medium armor classification'.

Pyrrha continued to pose in front of the mirror, a smile on her face. "I suppose that leaves Jeweler and Artificing as two open ones of note, if we are all to take weaponsmithing as Ruby suggested"

Nora enthusiastically raised her hand. "Oh, oh, I'll take artificing! I'm good at chemistry stuff, and I'm interested to see what else it does." Pyrrha nodded, as she started to walk back to the bathroom to change back into her uniform.

"Looks like I'll take jeweler than. We should ask Ruby what sort of supplies we will need for this, and arrange time to go shopping this weekend, provided any of it is actually sold in stores."
"Sounds good." Ren turned to Jaune, holding one of his new auto pistols. "But what do we do with the dropped items? Carrying around bone like armor and crystal weapons is bound to raise some questions among our peers."

Jaune examined his own dropped armor. "I guess we just have to keep those in reserve, like Yang and Ruby did during initiation. We'll have to ask about that, as well as figure out how to make our own storage packs and such. Ruby said we needed some sort of runes for it."

"Aw, that stinks. Was looking forward to testing these puppies out." Nora flexed her new gloves.

"Remember, discretion Nora. I'm sure we'll have plenty of time to utilize all our new equipment in time."

"Yeah yeah, spoilsport." Nora blew a raspberry at Ren, who only smiled in response.

"Speaking of time, what time is it now?" Pyrrha said, returning to the room in her school uniform.

Nora took out her scroll. "About 8:55. Why do you ask?"

Sounds of a scramble and screams came from outside. Jaune opened the door to JNPR's room to investigate, his teammates piling in on top of him.

Weiss ran from the RWBY dorm in a mad dash, racing down the hall. Ruby soon followed.

"To class, guildmates!"

"Class. Oh crap, class, we are going to be late!" Jaune shouted, rallying his team, who took off down the hall as well, stopping for just a second to lock their dorm room.

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Teams JNPR and RWBY started their first morning as Beacon students with a mad dash across the courtyard, heading toward their first class. Which began in five minutes, as Weiss so helpfully pointed out.

"How can you forget about class you dunce!? We are so going to be late!"

"It's not like I'm the only one! We all forgot the time, there was so much to be done this morning!" Ruby was clearly on the defensive, but was in too big a hurry to say much more. The teams made it to their first class with seconds to spare, and quickly found open seats.

"Well this is an auspicious start to the school year. Which class is this, anyways?" Weiss was still trying to catch her breath.

Blake checked her scroll. "Grimm Studies, according to the schedule."

Pyrrha was showing little signs of exertion herself. "On the bright side, at least we got in some morning cardio."
"Oh, we should do this every morning then." Nora was a regular ball of energy.

Ren shook his head. "I'm not opposed to a morning jog, but we should do it in a more structured way, Nora"

"I...okay I really can't argue that point. What do you think our professor will be like?" Jaune said while turning to Weiss.

Weiss was the picture of confidence. "Well, given this is an elite school for huntsmen, this should be enlightening and educational."

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Weiss was a Schnee, discipline and pose were ground into her from a young age. In Peter Port however, she found herself a powerful adversary, though she tried not to show it on her face. Weiss did all she could to channel her sisters martial discipline, but it could barely hold back her growing sense of boredom. Finally, she gave in somewhat, and allowed herself a moment of ranting.

[Weiss: I know professors are worthy of our respect, but this is pushing it.]

[Ren: I think there is a lesson in here somewhere. Difficult to ascertain exactly what though.]

[Blake: He seems to describe himself as full of wisdom and bravado.]

[Yang: Oh He's full of something all right.]

Several members of the guild muffled their laughter at Yang's joke as Professor Port continued his lecture, or rather, his tall tale about his youth. Pyrrha, Ren and Weiss were attempting to make sense of the lesson. The others appeared to be off in their own worlds, or struggling to stay awake.

Weiss found herself turning her gaze to her partner, who was hard at work writing something in your journal. Ruby noticed her gaze, and held up her notebook, showing Weiss a lovely caricature of their professor, labeled 'Professor Poop'. Weiss gripped her pencil in annoyance, but found herself taken back when Ruby set her journal back down, and flipped the page. On the page were drawings of the various grimm on the classrooms blackboard, with various items written beside each, identifying various types of materials harvested from each of them.

Weiss looked around the room. Her UI helpfully identified many of the students as 'Student Huntsman' or 'Student Huntress', along with their professions. The few who she knew or had been referenced by name had their placards filled out with their full names.

Turning to Jaune, she saw his notepad was filled with drawn versions of the symbols for various classes, and a rough count of what was in the room. Nora, it appears was doodling as well, several dome shaped things decorated her page, buzzing around a stick figure she suppose represented Nora herself.

Yang and Blake appeared to be discussing something silently, though nothing showed on guild
chat or party chat. Yang was creating what looked like a shopping list of various materials. Port continued droning on about something, cabbages or something Weiss thought.

[Weiss: What's that for Yang? Going shopping?]

[Yang: Oh, sorry, yeah it's a list of materials we'll need in the short term, for bags, guild storage, etc]

[Ren: Oh, so some of it can be purchased? We were wondering about that earlier.]

[Ruby: Outside the grimm materials, all the raw materials can.]

Weiss nodded, but any further inquiries were halted as Port seemed to have some to some sort of point.

"So, who among you believes themselves to be the embodiment of these traits?" Port said, staring out into the classroom in challenge. Weiss suddenly kicked herself mentally for not paying attention.

"Me! I'm all those things!" Nora was jumping up and down, her hand up.

The rest of teams RWBY and JNPR stared at her.

"Splendid!" Port said, gesturing to a large cage near the side of the classroom. Said cage was shaking, and the unmistakable sounds of growing coming from within. "Let's put it to the test then? Step forward, and face your opponent!"

Nora hooted in glee, retreating to the locker room to fetch her weapon Magnhild, as well as her huntress gear.

[Jaune: Is this wise? I mean, we haven't learned to hold back yet. Also, how did we not notice that grimm?]

[Blake: I think his story may have something to do with it.]

[Yang: Hard to concentrate when you are bored out of your mind.]

[Pyrrha: An interesting tactic, to be sure. Are you sure you are up for this Nora?]

[Nora: Pfft, I'm sure it's just some smallfry.]

[Ren: Still, be careful. All grimm are dangerous, and we don't want people asking certain questions day one.]

[Nora: I said it's fine. I'll blast it, smash it, and be back in my seat in no time.]

[Ruby: No worries guildy, we trust you.]

Nora returned, and silence further chatter with a wave to her teammates. Waves and cheers answered her and she nodded to Professor port, and took position opposite the cage, a few meters away. She shifted Magnhild to hammer form, and popped her shoulders.
Professor Port stood near the cages lock, his weapon, an axe-blunderbuss, in hand and ready. "Are you prepared, Ms. Valkyrie?"

Nora grinned. "Oh yeah, it won't even know what hit him."

"Excellent! Then let the match begin!" Port swung his weapon, severing the lock and releasing the grimm, a snarling Boarbatusk. The grimm charged at Nora, who dodges to the side, putting a bit of space between the grimm and her. It's attack having missed, the grimm paused to study her for a second. Huntress and Grimm circled each other, waiting for the the next attack.

"Go Nora!" Jaune shouted, "Give that Grimm a proper Team JNPR welcome!"

"You can do it!" Pyrrha cheered on her teammate, waving a hastily made JNPR flag.

"You've got this!" Ren shouted in support.

Nora smiled, aggravating the grimm. Once again it charged, but this time Nora did jump away, instead sidestepping at the last second, and hooked the Boarbatusk's tusks on the handle of the weapon. Using the grimm's momentum against it, she redirected its charge into a spin, hurling the grimm against the far wall. Stunned momentarily by the impact, the grimm was not prepared for Nora's follow up attack. Nora quickly shifted her weapon back to grenade launcher mode and fired a round into the grimm's side.

"Using a grimm's power against itself, well done!" Port said with a hearty bellow, "but will it be enough?"

The answer came a second later as the cloud of dust cleared, revealing a still living grimm.

"Rats! Looks like it's armor took the worst of it" Jaune said, eyeing the grimm for obvious signs of damage. The UI did note it had lost some health at least.

Ren shouted some advice for his partner. "Nora! Go for the belly, it's not armored there!"

Nora nodded, and shifted back to hammer mode as the grimm readied for another charge. Nora responded with a smile full of teeth, and met the charge head on. She planted her feet and swung her hammer in an underhanded arc, connecting with the lower jaw of the grimm and sending it flying end over end, landing on its back with a skid, finally crashing into a desk just in front of team CDNL.

Nora ran at the grimm with a flying leap and massive overhand swing, aiming for it's now exposed underbelly with a warcry of "Boop!" Her blow struck true, with all the effect of bashing a watermelon with a club.

The classroom cringed and averted their eyes as grimm ichor and bone fragments rained down team CDNL, their faces dumb stuck at the sudden shower.

"Gross!"

"I think some got into my mouth, gah the aftertaste!"

"Did you have to do him that way, Valkyrie?"
Nora for her part, was completely spotless. She smiled and gave a thumbs up to her team, who awkwardly clapped in response. Weiss looked like she was about to lose her lunch, while Blake just stared at the sight wide eyed and open mouthed. Ruby clapped enthusiastically as did Yang. Jaune got the feeling team CDNL was not going to forget this.

"Bravo! Bravo! It appears we are indeed in the presence of a true huntress in training!" Professor port said with a grin. Nora wiped the grimm remains off her hammer with a conveniently placed towel, and shifted her weapon back to grenade launcher form, hurrying over to regroup with her teammates.

"I'm afraid that's all the time we have for today. Be sure to cover the assigned readings, and would someone do me the favor of calling the janitor? Dismissed!"

Nora noted that the grimm hadn't yet vanished, through the students seemed more concerned with avoiding the remains than anything. Nora pointed to what remained of the carcass with her launcher. "Want me to drag that out of the way, professor?"

"What? Oh yes, if you would be so kind, Ms. Valkyrie". Port said with a nod. Nora grabbed it by a tusk, and dragged it off into a corner, subtly pocketing the loot off it, not that anyone was looking at her at this point.

Outside the classroom, Team RWBY, as well as Jaune and Pyrrha were recovering from the morning lesson.

"I think i'm going to be sick." Weiss looked even paler than usual, "I'm glad now I missed breakfast, else i'd have lost it in there'

"From the lecture or Nora's fight?" said Yang, checking her scroll for her next class.

Blake was still trying to get the image out of her head. "I think it was a bit of both."

"Come on, it wasn't that bad." Ruby said, trying to cheer up her team. "I mean, I've seen worse at least."

"That's probably just the effects of you know what at work, sis. Most people are a bit more off put by grimm guts flying all over their classmates"

Weiss shock her head and did her best to solder on. "So what's next on the agenda this morning?" The groups found themselves joined at last by Nora and Ren.

"See Ren, told you I could do it. And without our special thing." Nora whispered to to partner.

"I had no doubts, hello again everyone". Ren waved to his teammates and Team RWBY.

Yang returned the wave. "Welcome back, we are just going over our schedules."
Teams RWBY and JNPR took out their scrolls and checked their schedules. The teams divided up to head off, with a promise to regroup for lunch. Ruby and Jaune headed off together, having the same class next.

"Looks like we have a bit of time to talk on the way." Jaune said, scratching the back of his head.

"Yep! Anything on your mind?"

"Not much, well, besides how to ask about the training stuff."

"Yeah, I'm still not sure how I'm going to broach that subject with the headmaster."

"Personally, I prefer the direct approach." came a voice from behind them.

Jaune and Ruby spun around to find themselves face to face with Professor Ozpin, who was calming drinking his coffee.

"Headmaster!" Jaune said, trying to calm down his racing heart.

Ozpin took a sip from his mug. "Mr Arc, Ms Rose. Judging by the looks on your faces, I trust you had an interesting experience in Proffer Ports class."

"Well" Jaune said, still looking a bit pale "It certainly was a thing."

"Port has be a bit, verbose, but there is wisdom in his teachings, if you know where to find them". Ozpin took a sip and gestered for the students to walk with him. Ruby and Jaune followed along with only a bit of hesitation.

"So, what is it you wanted to discuss with me?"

Ruby and Jaune exchanged a look, before Ruby spoke first. "Well, we were wondering, well, not we as in me and Jaune, more like we as in teams RWBY and JNPR. Well, not that me and Jaune aren't wondering."

"Breath, Ms Rose."

"Sorry." Ruby scratched the back of her head in nervousness. "Well, we had a question about team training."

"Oh? Teams do have time in the schedules set aside for it. Or do you have some more specific question about the process?"

"It's more a question about where we can train. More specifically, on private training areas." Jaune said, throwing Ruby a line, much to her appreciation.

"There are places that can be reserved for training outside the eyes of your fellow students. You should be able to reserve those on your scrolls."

Ruby continued. "We know, we know. It's just, we were hoping for a place with some, ah, particular requirements."

"Such as?" Ozpin took a sip, and raised an eyebrow.
"Well, for one, large and open would be nice. Oh, and well, Grimm infested."

Ozpin stopped. "Training in the presence of the enemy is quite risky, Ms Rose. While there are training areas that meet those requirements, they are not normally reservable by freshman students."

"But it's not without precedent to allow it, right?"

"I see you've been talking with your father, haven't you Ms Rose?" Ruby nodded in affirmation. "You are correct in that exceptions have been made in the past in light of, well, extraordinary circumstances. I take it this has something to do with your performance during initiation?"

"It does. I suppose you have some questions about that?"

"I do indeed Ms. Rose, but I do not think this would be the sort of conversation to have in the middle of a hallway. But I take it you wish to train against grimm to develop the skills set you demonstrated?"

"It's how I've learned so far. Patch has no shortage of grimm, as you know."

"Hmm, and what do you think about the situation Mr Arc?"

"Well, I'd be lying if I said it wasn't a scary proposition, but Ruby hasn't mislead us so far. It would be best to practice in a place where we don't have to worry about harming any fellow students by any negligence or accident."

"Ms Rose is not the leader of team JNPR, Mr Arc, you are. If you are allowed access to higher level training areas, it will be dangerous, and the school cannot guarantee your safety if the situation got out of control."

"I trust my team, they haven't let me down yet. And hey, doesn't sound much worse then initiation."

"It's not just a matter of your teams supporting you. As leaders, their well being is part of your duty. Leadership is a burden and a responsibility, one you will have to strive to uphold and demonstrate. Do you believe you can uphold that responsibility while training in such a dangerous area? Are you willing to take your teammates lives into your own hands?"

Ruby and Jaune shared a look. It was once thing to risk themselves, but another thing to risk the others.

"I will admit that that display of yours interests me, but I do not want to see you risk life and limb for solely for the sake of power, that's a path that had lead to many a huntsman's death or torment. I do not think either of you are the sort who would use their teammates as a mere stepping stone or disposable asset. The silent look of horror at the thought of that on the faces of Jaune and Ruby told Ozpin his judgement was correct. There was still a lot of unknowns to this situation, his own investigating having just begun. The request would be mutual beneficial, but it was till a great risk."

"That being said" Ozpin continued, "I do believe your request is not done out of such selfishness, and that you do have the best interests of your teams in mind. Therefore, I will gives this request all due consideration."

"Thank you!" they cried in unison.
"I said consideration, not grant. In the meantime, I want you to both think hard about what you want to accomplish here, as well as your goals as team leaders. Now, I've taken up enough of your time, your next class should be starting soon."

"Oh man not again, Thanks Professor! Come on before we are late Ruby!"

"Thanks again headmaster!" Ruby took off with Jaune.

"Interesting start to the year this is." Ozpin thought to himself while resuming his walk to his office. It was time he had a chat with a certain professor at Signal Academy.

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After the end of the days classes, Teams RWBY and JNPR met up at what would become one of their favorite haunts: the Library. Gathered together in one of the reading rooms, each had a pile of books on front of them. Ruby was looking over the latest issues of the popular weapons magazine 'Dust and Steel', while Weiss was looking over a journal dealing with the latest advances in dust alchemy and an article on classical elements. Yang was checking out a magazine with the latest in motorcycle gear, and Blake had a stack of books over various subjects, most notable a biography about one of Vale's most successful illusionists.

Team JNPR was similarly neck deep in their own literature. Jaune was reviewing some history texts, writing down notes both for class as well as personal interest. Pyrrha had a mix of biographies and stories about legendary figures, both historical and mythical. Nora was nose deep in a book entitled "Fundamentals of Atleasian Engineering" and making several notes on a sheet of grid paper. Ren for his part was calming reading the latest issue of "Remnant Outdoorsman".

It was Yang who first broke the silence. "So...anyone have anything interesting happen to them today? I mean, besides Nora's little display in Ports class."

"Seems that most of the professors here, while knowledgeable, have their quirks" Weiss said, turning the page of her journal. "Thankfully I didn't have anyone else quite as...testing as Port"

"The facilities here are quite nice. Quite a few options for close quarters and ranged combat training" Pyrrha was greatly looking forward to testing some of them out.

Nora's eyes were filled with sparkles "And the Gym! It's everything a girl could want or need."

"The gym?" Yang had a wide smile on her face, "it's nice, sure, but the real action is the pools. Indoor and outdoor ones at that! One to work out in, and one for mesmerizing our fellow students." Yang could already picture herself, a new swimsuit already added to her shopping list.

"There are spacious and well equip workshops for weapon maintenance and forging. The possibilities, oh I'm going to have so much fun!" Ruby predicted she'd been spending many a hour working on this or that.

"The library is well stocked as well, as you all clearly see". Blake knew she'd be spending plenty of
"And Vale is just a short ride away if we are after some entertainment, this place rocks!" Yang shouted with a fist raised, before being shushed by a nearby student aide. She blushed and whispered a quiet apology.

"Well, yeah all that stuff is pretty nice, but we actually do have some news. Isn't that right Ruby?" Jaune looked at his fellow team leader, who suddenly looked like a deer caught in the headlights of a truck.

"Oh, what's up sis?"

Ruby finally found her composure and spoke, "Yeah, about that, me and Jaune ran into the headmaster this morning. We told him about our request for a training space, he said he'd consider it"

"Already? I thought you two were going to come up with some sort of plan first."

"We were Yang, it just sort of happened, so i figured we'd just wing it. Winging it is something leaders do at times, right?"

"Yes? I think so at least." Jaune wasn't quite sure if it was proper leadership or not, but he had to admit he had been flying by the seat of his pants thus far.

"Anyways, Professor Ozpin said he'd consider it. So, That's a win?"

Weiss nodded in affirmation, "It's a win. Honestly, any sort of forward progress would be at this point. I suppose it's business as usual till we get a decision one way or the other. Do we have a backup plan for a no?"

Ruby shrugged "If it comes to that, we'll just have to practice when and where we can, so long as it's outside the eyes of the students. There is quite a bit you can learn outside of combat, just let your mind and body go where it wants to, so long as no one gets hurt that is."

"Sounds like a plan to me." Jaune checked his scroll for the time. "It's getting pretty late though, we should break for now and then head back to the dorms. I've already got a pile of homework waiting for me, I'm sure everyone else is in the same boat." Groans from all assembled confirmed his suspicions. Books were gathered up, checked out, and carried off to their respective dorms.

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Jaune rubbed his eyes, the words on the pages swirling around like some sort of fog. He had to admit that huntsmen homework was quite different from the schoolwork he was accustomed to. Some was similar, true, but the rest? It was a mishmash of everything: hunting tactics, combat scenarios, bylaws and kingdom laws, weapon maintenance, dust, you name it. Some of it was fascinating stuff, but there was just so much of it. Jaune had expected a huntsman academy to be more heroics and glory and less paperwork.
Jaune did find himself more easily grasping some of it, the facts just flowing into his mind, memory calling up once obscure or long forgotten lessons from his childhood schooling. Survival tactics, history, and tales of heroics and resolve, these he had no trouble picking up, his mind eager for more and more. He turned from his work spared a glance around the room.

Pyrrha had easily finished her work, and was once again playing with the UI, taking notes and writing down questions to ask Ruby later. A few sets of weapons and armor lay on her bed, neatly organized, yet more rewards from her career as a fighter.

Nora was still nose deep in her checked out library books. She had brought her weapon home, and was examining it closely, taking notes and checking references in her various texts. Page after page of grid paper was piled next to her completed homework, covered in drawings and what looked like schematics? Jaune wasn't quite sure.

Ren was quietly meditating on his own bed, already having changed into his nightclothes. Jaune wondered what he was thinking about, Ren's face the image of serenity and peace. Jaune knew so little about this team of his. He figured it may be time to do something about that.

"So I was thinking, we should do something together as a team. You know, maybe this weekend sometime? Get to know each other and all that".

"That sounds like a wonderful idea, Jaune. Do you have anything in mind?" Pyrrha laid down her latest outfit, and walked over to her partner. Ren's eyes opened as he faced JNPR's leader, and Nora turned an ear toward him as well.

"How about a meal in Vale and a movie? Bit cliche, but a fairly safe choice"

"I'm looking forward to it already. That sound good to you Nora?" Ren turned to his partner, who finally turned to face the group.

"Yep! Been a while since we last saw something in a cinema, and I've got a few things I'd like to pick up while we are in vale. Miscellaneous stuff really, but I've got a vision of something in my head now, and I want to get it while the getting is good".

"Ruby did say we should go with our instincts for the time being. Looks like all are in agreement here, nice initiative, leader." Pyrrha gave her partner a wink, drawing a blush. "Now that that's set, you have any questions on your work Jaune? You look a bit lost"

"Just homework, and working on the team training schedules."

Pyrrha pulled up a chair and sat down next to him. "Need any help?"

"Oh? Sure I guess, bit lost on this one here" Jaune pointed to one of his worksheets.

As nodded and Pyrrha moved into explanation mode, Ren and Nora went back into their own activities. "Leader, huh?" Jaune thought to himself, doing his best to follow along with Pyrrha. He doubted this leadership thing would always be that easy.

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Hours later and across the hall, a single light still burned. Ruby was still hard at work on her own assignments, both for class as well as various tasks needed for the guild and her own team. Before her were several texts, worksheets, notebooks, and an empty mug, a pencil in her hand flying though various pages marking this and that. Most of her team was long since asleep, Yang snoring softly on her bunk, and Blake below that on her bed, and open book about mysticism on her face like a makeshift eye mask.

Ruby was startled by the sudden appearance of Weiss's face. " Didn't figure you for a night eye Ruby, what's got you up so late?"

"Weiss!? I thought you were asleep already. I'm just finishing up some stuff."

"Quite a lot for day one." Weiss was actually quite taken back from the sheer volume of it.

"Skipping two years means a lot of catch up. Not to mention, Team related stuff, guild related stuff, shopping lists, materials lists and so on. There is so much to be done, runes to have etched, outfits and bags to sew, training regiments, profession data to compile, I get the feeling I'm going to be spending many a night like this."

"I respect hard work and all, but don't burn yourself out, we've no need for a husk for a leader."

Ruby sighed. "I'm not sure I'm leadership material or not yet."

Weiss pointed a finger at Ruby's face, "Don't sell yourself short Ruby. You may be hyperactive, socially awkward, and sickeningly sweet at times" Ruby cringed a bit " But you are clearly a determined person, and I can't deny you're a powerful huntress. I think you have a spark in you that will make you a great leader, given the proper nurturing."

"Oh? And I suppose you'll humbly offer your services there" Ruby's smile grew.

"You can expect nothing less, what you do reflects on all of us, and I'll not have an improper leader, we'll whip you into shape, you can count on it."

"Now, good luck with your studies, and try to get some sleep."

Weiss nodded to herself, sure of her advice. Weiss gave her a smile, and moved toward the bathroom.

"Weiss?"

"Yeah Ruby?"

"Thanks."

Weiss nodded, "Anytime." As Weiss left, Ruby's mind drifting in all directions. Ruby truly hoped she had what it takes to lead her team, and her guild. She smacked her cheeks to clear out any mental cobwebs, and got back into the task at hand. If Weiss could trust in her, Ruby thought, then she dang well better make sure she lived up to that trust.

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Ozpin sat in his office, the glow of monitors illuminating his form. In truth, the request from Teams RWBY and JNPR had been somewhat expected, a desire to explore great powers outside the prying eyes of students was a request he had granted in times past, though never before so early in a students career.

The monitors in his office glowed, displaying records for each of the members of teams RWBY and JNPR, along side stills from their initiation. For most, there was nothing really of note, nothing to explain where these abilities may have come from. Most assuredly, there were also no major infractions suggesting the students were a danger. Granted, given the varied backgrounds of the students, accurate records were rather hard to come by in some cases.

The abilities themselves intrigued him, but so far his searches hadn't shown anything quite like them in recent history. He had attempted to cross reference them with fairy tales, myths and other legendary accounts, but such a task was long, as he needed more to go off. Granted the request would give him this, but it would be a risk for both the academy and the students themselves.

But one thing he knew for certain: all roads lead to Taiyang's daughters. He had attempted to message Qrow, but so far no reply had come, expected given field conditions. That left one avenue, and though the hour was late, Ozpin felt this call would be expected.

He opened a secure channel, and dialed a familiar number, the ringtone sounded in his otherwise empty office. A few rings later, the face of Taiyang Xiao Long appeared on screen.

"Hello Professor Xiao Long, I trust I've not woken you?"

"Formalities eh? I thought we knew each other well enough to skip such things. As for me, I had a feeling you'd be calling. I trust this is about my daughters?"

"Indeed it is, Taiyang. They put on quite the performance during initiation."

"Heh, they tend to do that. Good girls though, you haven't got anything to worry about."

"Glad to hear that."

"Well, let's get to it then, eh old man? I'm not as knowledgeable about this as the girls, but I bet I can satisfy your curiosity, or at least silence your doubts."

Ozpin took a lip and allowed himself a small smile. "That's all I can ask for."
It had been a week since the brief encounter with the headmaster, and so far no answer had come in regards to their request. In absence of a grimm infested training area ripe for harvest, the teams had settled into a training schedule more fitting average students of a huntsmen academy.

Ruby's scroll rang out with her 6:00 AM alarm, driving her from her dreams of being a powerful huntress hunting cookie monsters for the benefit of all mankind, and into a world where she was a super powered huntress slaughtering regular monsters for mankind and loot. Reality for Ruby and the guild was far more interesting than many people's dreams.

Ruby took in the sounds of the morning, and moved onto her first task: setting the guild message of the day.

[ROSE] Message of the day [ROSE]: Another day at Beacon! Keep on keeping on guildmates!

The coffee machine clicked on, beginning it's task of preparing the teams morning pick me up. Ruby pulled off her eye mask and stretched, before hopping off the bed. Between the sounds of alarms and the smells of freshly brewed Valean Roast, the other members of team RWBY were roused from their slumbers.

"Good morning teammates!" Ruby said far too cheerfully for so early in the morning.

The mess of blond hair and curve that was Yang responded with a "morning sis" before hopping off her bunk and heading toward the bathroom.

A muffled voice came from beneath the pile of books on Blake's bunk. "What? Morning already?"

"Yep! Rise and shine Blake! What kept you up so late anyways?"

"Combination of dust mechanics homework, some personal reading, and practicing my mantras."

"Yeah about that, can you not do that so late next time? That light show of yours was quite distracting." Weiss rolled out of bed and instantly accepted a mug offered to her by Ruby I still can't believe Jaune Arc of all people figured those things out, anyways."

"He said it just sort of happened while reading aloud." Blake said as she dug herself out of the pile of books and sat up in bed, running some fingers through her frazzled hair. She reached for her own mug, which Ruby had also helpfully filled up. Blake accepted it with a smile, and took a sip, holding the mug in one hand and raising her right, pointing with a finger that glowed with pink and purple light.

Blake drew a pattern in the air and recited the first mantra, "Fixed. Focused. Concentration". As she finished a circular rune appeared over her head for brief second.

"Stored spells, it's an interesting concept. You don't have anything like that Ruby?" Weiss turned to her partner, while starting to come out her hair"
Ruby set aside a mug for Yang and was mixing sugar into her own. "Nope, so far only Jaune and Blake can do that. It's really, really cool though, you both all making amazing progress at your professions!"

"Of course, did you expect anything else? " Weiss looked rather proud of herself for being so early in the morning. Blake merely let out a breath and a small shake of her head, before continuing with her next mantra.

"Unbroken. Unshaken. Resolve."

"Things will go faster once we finally get you back into the field, only so much you can practice in a normal team training room. And the time you spend there is better spent learning to hold back, which is as important as learning your new skills" Yang had returned from the bathroom at last, and Weiss hurried to take her pace. Ruby and Blake were busy laying out their Beacon tracksuits for the morning run.

Ruby checked over her guild project list, and the growing list for materials shopping. Work had started a bit on a new outfit for Weiss, and Ruby had taken initial measurements for Blake, who was still debating exactly what she wanted. Schematics for a new sniper scythe were also laid out, as well as ones for a new variant ballistic chain scythe for Blake, and another set of dual ranged shot gauntlets for Yang. Weiss had yet to commit to a new weapon, having received a drop during initiation. Ruby double checked to make sure she had the CAD data for her new weapon on her scroll, she'd be needing it today.

The rest of the morning passed relatively quietly for team RWBY's members, between visits to the bathroom and getting dressed in their morning workout attire.

Once everyone was set, Ruby fired off a message to the other half the guild.

[Ruby: Morning JNPR! We are all set here, heading out, how about you?]

[Jaune: Good morning! We are nearly set here, meet you there]

[Pyrrha: Good morning to you, Ruby]

[Rem: Morning everyone.]

[Nora: Boops all around! Morning!]

Ruby lead her teammates outside, and headed toward the dorm's exit, ready to begin stretching for the morning run and then it would be time to join the growing crowd of students already running the circuit around the academy. JNPR joined them a few minutes later, and exchanged their in person greetings, before the teams set off on their run.

Beacon, despite the early hour, was already a hive of activity. Students from all years were jogging, doing morning calisthenics, tai chi, yoga, and other activities. The day of a huntsmen started early, and many would be working out, training, or studying well into the evening. RWBY and JNPR set a good pace, and from the outside appeared to be taking their morning in silence. For those who had a UI the picture was quite different, with a dozen conversation flowing in chat. Jaune and Blake had somewhat bonded over their shared abilities, and were discussing mantra keywords and their methods of discovery. Weiss was chatting with Pyrrha about long range tactics, while Ren and Yang debated infighting. Nora was all but spamming Ruby with questions related to
some proposed upgrades to Magnhild Nora had devised, and Ruby promised to help her begin the process during their shared maintenance/engineering class that day.

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After a half hour of jogging followed by a half hour of calisthenics helpfully lead by Nora, the groups wrapped up morning training to return to the dorms for a quick shower before breakfast and class. Showered and changed into their uniforms, JNPR Gathered in RWBY's dorm for a quick guild meeting prior to breakfast.

Ruby and Jaune sat on one side of the room, while the others sat opposite of them. Ruby called the group to order, "Alright Guild, lets get this meeting started! First up, bags are finished! Thanks again Sis for the help!"

Yang brushed some imaginary dirt off her shoulder "Ah, it was nothing. We'll have to teach you all to etch runes sometime, so you can produce your own. One can never have too many bags, trust me."

"Oh, so these are the them then?" Ren said, picking up a smallish waist pack.

"Yep! Finished them last night. Grab whichever you want, they are all the same size. They'll very useful for when you are out in the field." Ruby said, clearly proud of her work.

"Not to mention when shopping." Yang said, clearly speaking from experience " It's amazing to not have to carry around a ton of bags all over town, and then somehow stick them on your motorcycle".

"Can't say the motorcycle thing will be an issue for us, but this will be very handy for this weekend, we are planning to hit up Vale again, shopping and so forth." Jaune picked up his bag, and judged it's weight. For something that could hold so much, it was remarkable light, and didn't appear anything fantastical from the outside.

"Thank you for this Ruby, they look great" Pyrrha said while giving Ruby a bright smile.

"My pleasure. Next up, Dads forms arrived, wanna take this one Yang?"

Yang stood up and moved to her desk, and retrieved several papers, which she then handed out to everyone.

Weiss read hers, "guild apprentice applications? Aren't we already in a guild?"

Yang nodded, "So it's like this, these are applications to the Remnant Huntsmen's Guild, a inter-kingdom association of huntsmen and huntresses. Our father knows the head of the guild here in Vale, and says he can get these processed as soon as possible"

"But why though?" Weiss was still quite visibly confused. Blake picked up on plan however.

"It's plausible deniability. If we are to maintain secrecy, then this provides us with an easy out
should any guild talk slip out. We can claim we are just talking about this one, and not the Noble Roses."

"Right on the money Blake." Yang said with a wink towards her partner.

Weiss's eyes grew with understanding. "That's...actually quite clever."

"How soon should we complete these?" Pyrrha asked, reading over the form.

"Dad says as soon as you can. It will take a few days to get them processed, and we'll cover any initial dues from the guild funds."

Everyone nodded, and set theirs down for later completion. "Now" Ruby said, moving to the last item on the agenda, "any progress updates of note? Lets start on the RWBY side, wanna go first Blake?"

"Sure." Blake got up and stood where both teams could see her. "Two main things so far. First, Thanks to Jaune, we've worked out our classes can do mantras, which are pre-charged spells or skills activated by reciting select words and drawing a rune. I've got two down so far, The Mantra of Resolve and the Mantra of Concentration."

"And I've got three, the mantras of Truth, Solace, and Lore. Last use of each seems more powerful, and I swear you can hear the echoes of speeches and rituals when I use them."

Blake continued, "As for the class in general, I think I've figured some of it out. I'm not sure how the time part of 'chronomancer' works yet, but the core of the class appears to revolve around illusions, misdirection, etc. For example" Blake flicked her wrist, and was suddenly holding a lien card.

"So, parlor tricks? Hard to see that useful in combat".

"That's not the important part, Weiss" Blake was clearly enjoying this. "The important thing is, I'm not actually holding anything."

Blake offered the card to Weiss, who inspected it for a few seconds before the card dissolved into a mix of pink and purple light and butterflies.

The groups eyes went wide. "Wow that's...wow" Everyone nodded in agreement with Nora.

"Still working out the full utility of this, and the extent of what all it can do".

"I think you are going somewhere awesome with this one, partner" Yang gave Blake a thumbs up.

"Alright, how about you Weiss?" Ruby turned to her own partner, who smoothed out her skirt and stood up.

"Not a whole lot thus far save for the discovery of stances, of which I've only worked out two to date: 'Stone Resonance' which is defensive, and 'Aquatic stance' which seems to be a 'healing' skill" Weiss said, with finger quotes. "As for the root function of the class, I'm thinking it's to do with the classical elements in some way. So basically, if Blake's profession is about illusions and such, and you are...ah, death? Then maybe i'm elemental magic, and let me tell you, those aren't words I ever thought I'd say"
"If I wasn't living this, I don't think I'd believe any of this ether Weiss." Ruby turned to the JNPR side of the guild. "Alright, wraps up team RWBY, how's things looking on your side of the woods, Jaune?"

Jaune sat up and began his report. "Well, as Blake mentioned, I've been working on my mantras, and I've also figured out something else class wise. Given all the reading I've been doing, I noticed a new icon became available in the UI, and when I use it, this happens." Jaune mentally pressed the button, and suddenly was holding a large, glowing blue tome.

"What in Remnant is that?" Weiss said, staring at the tome in question.

"Believe it or not, it's a history text of sorts. More specifically, it's a collection of tales about Valean heroes from the great war and before, entitled "The Tome of Courage". It's great stuff, full of tales of valiant charges, desperate defenses, stories exalting the beauty of Vale, boasting heroes, and fond memories of sacrifice. It's, actually the sort of stuff my parents read to me as a kid."

"So you summon...history books? Like a walking library or archive?" Blake was intrigued by the concept.

"Not quite, check this out" Jaune said, as he waved open the book, it suddenly flew above his head and projected an intricate blue runic circle, and caused him to be surrounded in a ring of floating pages and blue light. He reached out for some and flicked his wrist, and a blast of blue light emanate forth. As their minds briefly flashed with images of lines unbroken and heroes remembered, the guilds UI's showed several buffs had been applied to each of them.

"It's not that I produced history, I'm literally weaponizing it. And not just by quoting inspiring words or tales, it physically enhances you. And I see space for two more books here. Not to mention, when we started sparring, it has passive defensive effects while not actively in use."

"Stories that both inspire the mind and enhance the body. That's incredible" Blake was in awe over it, as any proper bibliophile would be.

"You know, that passive effect sounds a lot like what dad does, Ruby. Both even have 'courage in the name, though his is a shield and Jaune's a tome"

"Oh, you're right! And if that's the case, the other two should be about 'justice' and 'resolve' in some way. We should let dad know, maybe he has some pointers for you if you both turn out to have the same base profession. Awesome work Jaune!"

"Th..thanks. Though I didn't do anything but read, really".

"Progress is progress, don't sell yourself short" Ruby gave her fellow team leader a sincere smile, which Jaune did his best to return. "Now, how about the rest of JNPR?" Pyrrha, Ren and Nora shared a look. Ren was the first to speak.

"Weiss's talk of stances seems to apply to me as well. During sparring, I fell into a new form which the UI called "Griffon Stance". When it activated, and we all saw a pale green spectral griffin, and I was enveloped in a similar green light. It felt...like a rush of energy, strength, and endurance, but only for a few seconds."

"So both Weiss and you have stances too? Cool!" The guild turned to Yang at her outburst.
"You have these as well?"

"Sure do Weiss. Looks like it's a common element of our three professions. We'll link up later, maybe we can work out more how it works for you two, provided it's anything like how it works for me."

"That would be very helpful, thank you." Ren gave Yang a nod of thanks, as did Weiss, though Weiss was not looking forward to long hours spent with Yang and her brashness.

"I suppose I should go next then. I'm sorry to report I've not managed to uncover much in terms of my own profession, though I've spent a great deal of time reviewing various rewards granted for previous victories or experiences. Looks like I'll be well stocked in terms of equipment for some time."

"Really Pyrrha? That's surprising, normally something or another profession wise would be manifesting by now"

"It's indeed frustrating, Ruby, but that appears to be the situation I'm in. It's like there is some connection that I'm struggling to make, a voice that I hear on the wind, but never clearly enough to make out what it's saying. It's usually the loudest when my eyes are closed, or when I'm not thinking of anything in particular. Ren's been trying to teach me some of his meditation techniques, but so far nothing substantial."

"Not even with the racial/kingdom techniques?"

"I do not appear to even have those."

"That's...different. The rest of you can see them, right? I mean, even if you cannot use them yet."

Everyone else expressed their acknowledgement, save for Pyrrha.

"You can see my frustration. Perhaps being engaged with the enemy will bring some clarity, or like Jaune, reading something may trigger a connection. I'll keep at it."

"That's all we can ask for, Pyrrha". Pyrrha smiled at her partner, who blushed in response.

"Well, I guess I'm last here. And sadly, I've got nothing. No new skills, no magic this or that, nothing. I'm kind of bummed out it, honestly. All I seem to have is an insatiable desire to read, a pile of dodads on my desk and a pile of drawings."

"Don't be so hard on yourself Nora, I mean, you did do that electric field thing during initiation and all."

"That wasn't magic though, it was a applied discharge of residual lightning dust energy from my weapon upon a localized area." Everyone turned to Nora, in visible shock.

"Did you always talk like that, Nora?"

"Down and out? No, I'm usually more hyperactive and cheerful and cute, or so Ren says". Ren would agree with the first two, and unconvincingly deny the last.
Ruby sweat dropped, "No, I mean the technical jargon. I noticed that while you were discussing your planned weapon redesign with me earlier. Have you always talked like that?"

Nora was taken back. "Now that I think of it, no? Could this be one of those personality side effect thingies you spoke about?"

"I think so. Got any of your drawings handy?" Nora pulled out her scroll and handed it to Ruby.

"These aren't doodles, they are full on schematics, complicated ones at that even. Some of this I've not seen before, they are far more complicated than what I drew up to forge crescent rose or any of my other weapons."

"Can I see?" Weiss asked, and Nora handed the scroll to her. "This is, well, it's like high level Atlas tech. I'm quite impressed actually, you came up with all this?"

"Yep! All this week in fact. Even started building a bit of it given what we bought last weekend in Vale, and what I could use from Beacon's maintenance shop. I need a few more important bits though."

"I see that" Weiss said, flipping between drawings, "Some of this may be hard to get without raising attention though. I could use my connections to order some of it, but that would generate some questions I'm not sure how to answer. I do know one person who may be able to get them for you though" Weiss handed Nora back her scroll.

"Really? Who! Tell me tell me tell me!"

"The headmaster. Given what beacon has, and his position, he's got to know the right suppliers and contacts."

"I guess that's one more thing to ask him about when he gives us his decision and all." Nora looked hopeful, but that may be more due to the sympathetic hug her partner was giving her.

"In the meantime, stick with this Nora. If side effects are steering you in a direction, it may be important. Just do, you know, what you are going to do. Now, that's all on this week's agenda, remember your new bags and guild forms JNPR, and let's go to breakfast! Chocolate chip pancakes wait for no woman!"

"Dang right Ruby!" Nora felt a sense of comradely with her guild leader.

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The first morning classes passed with little excitement, the teams often divided up into separate classes, depending on their chosen academic focuses. Guild chat was light as there was little to talk about, so most chat was in person and of a scholastic nature.

Nora, Ruby, Jaune and Weiss found themselves reunited for the days maintenance and engineering class. All the students assembled had their weapons on hand, and the professor was floating between them, offering help and insight where appropriate.
Nora was showing off the proposed upgrades to Magnhild, while Jaune was looking into a completely new weapon altogether, unwilling at this point to do major upgrades to his family heirloom. Ruby was helping both of them, while doing initial work on a new scythe. Weiss was performing basic maintenance and augments, to optimize her weapons dust usage.

"So the selector switch will go here, and the new lightning dust capacitors will go right here and here. Should give me a lot more options in a fight in terms of grenade selection."

Ruby nodded, "That sounds good to me Nora. We can install the runs and inscriptions, once we are back in the dorm." The last part was added quietly, not that it would have been audible over the sounds of the workshop.

Nora nodded as she reached for a power screwdriver and began disassembling her trigger group. "How about you Jaune?"

"Good I guess, this is a bit confusing. I saw this design on rem-net, thinking of a scabbard like this. See, you stick in the blade like so and press this button here, and presto, you have a heavy blade option, while still being able to use it separately as an expandable shield and traditional sword. It's my first time forging though, so I'm a bit nervous."

"I like it! Keeps the traditional flair with new utility. I'm sure you'll do fine, we are all nervous our first time. You bring enough dust alloyed steel for today's work?"

"If I added it all up correctly, then yes, and thanks for giving me all these ingots.. Figure I'd start with the blade, and move onto the mecha shift shield stuff later, with your and Nora's help."

"How's the armorsmithing going?"

"Pretty well so far, Yang has been giving me pointers on where to start. Trying to pick out a final design for myself, hope to get it knocked out once I'm done with this project."

"Good good, take the ingots over to the auto-forge, and make sure you bring along the CAD design on your scroll. It will draw out the blade, though you'll need to sharpen it manually. I'll see you there in a bit, got some blades to forge myself." Jaune gathered his stuff and headed over to the admittedly complicated looking machine.

Ruby turned to her own partner, who was already hard at work, a set of precision tools out. "Before you ask, I'm all set here Ruby. Just doing a bit of modifications to my dust cylinder, the, ah, other sword I got gave me some ideas, alongside something I read this weekend. Also leaving a bit of room for you know what." Ruby could see what she meant, as Weiss had left plenty of room for where the inscriptions and rune would be bonded to the revised weapon.

"Awesome partner! We'll get you hooked up as soon as your done. Love that new cylinder design as well."

Weiss smiled "Thanks, designed it the other day, I must say the milling machine here is phenomenal."

"All the tools here are" Nora said, examining a spring. "This is far more high end the one Ren and I had access to previously. And that's good, I've got a lot to build as you both know."
"And we can't wait to see it all." Ruby said, giving Nora a gentle pat on the back. "Now if you excuse me, I'm off to forge me some blades, and make sure Jaune doesn't somehow kill himself at the auto forge."

Ruby gave her companions are wave and gathered up her own ingots and heading off to find Jaune, who to her pleasure had located the correct machine, and was spellbound watching it begin to shape the metal. Ruby truly loved workshops, the smells, the sounds, the excitement and dedication in the eyes of the students as they turned lumps of metal and polymer into the tools they would use to guard their lives and the lives of others. Every one of their designs gave insight into what he or she considered important or useful in their chosen trade. Next to her dorm, it was here that felt the most like home to Ruby.

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Lunch came and went, and with it independent training classes, and the guild reunited for one most of them considered their favorite class: Professor Goodwitch's combat class. Weapons at their side and dressed in their hunting attire, they gathered in their seats and watched as the professor called out the days first combatants, waiting for their turn. And then waiting. And waiting some more.

[Yang: this sucks, are we ever going to get called here? It's been a week already]

[Pyrrha: It does seem rather suspec. The professor keeps eyeing us, but no one from JNPR nor RWBY has been called upon yet.]

[Ren: Even the other students have started to notice. They snicker every time we get passed over.]

[Weiss: This can't be coincidence. They must be monitoring team sparring and are hesitant to call us before we demonstrate we can handle it.]

[Jaune: Well Pyrrha and Nora are doing well in that regard, me and Ren, a bit less so.]

[Blake: I'm coming along alright, and Weiss, honestly i don't think many could tell even if a skill of yours did pop up, given your normal combat style]

Ruby sighed, she could feel their frustrations. As much as she loved watching the students, and especially, watching all the new weapons at work, she could tell the rest, save for perhaps Jaune, we eager to get in the ring and show off.

As another duo finished up, with the professor signaling a victory for team CRML. Ruby started to zone out, only to be shook back to reality by the sounds of the professor once again calling out the next set of students.

"Cardin Winchester" Glynda pressed a button, causing the leader of team CRDN to appear on screen.

"And Ruby Rose!" Ruby shot to her feet. "Yes ma'am!

"Come on down Ms. Rose, and get ready."
"Yes! Be right there!"

"Finally!" Yang threw a fist into the air. "Go get him Ruby! For the pride of Team RWBY!"

Weiss and Blake added their own encouragement as Ruby, quite stiff at the sudden focus on her, walked down to stage, where an already smug and smiling Cardin was waiting for her.

"So they finally let the kids out to play, eh?" His teammates laughed. "I'll try not to hurt you too bad, little girl".

"Rip his head off, Sis!"

"Break his legs!" Nora gave Yang a high five, their thoughts in sync.

Ruby smile, and deployed her scythe. She took a relaxed stance, while Cardin threw his mace over his shoulder and motioned for her to bring it.

"Begin!" Professor Goodwitch shouted.

Cardin moved to quickly finish the fight with a single overhead smash only to hit nothing but red rose petals and air, Ruby easily dodging the strike and moving to his flank. He had little time to move his mace into a defensive posture before intercepting a strike from Ruby that forced him back a few inches due to the unexpected power of the blow. Cardin's counter swing hit air again as Ruby ducked it, before pivoting with her scythe for a double legged kick that knocked Cardin from his feet, though he quickly recovered with a roll. He brought his mace down again, this time contracting the ground, and expelling a wave of burning dust and ash, which Ruby hopped over, using a mid air shot from her weapon to propel her at Cardin's head with a horizontal swipe of Crescent Rose. He dodged at the last possible instant, leaving him a few hairs shorter than he was before.

Cardin swung again and again, but each time Ruby dodged, zipping in and out of range, delivering blows here and there, chipping away at his aura. Ruby didn't like her odds of taking a blow from the massive weapon, strong as she was, so she used her impressive speed to ensure none of his blows connected. Cardin for his part had little idea how to answer Ruby's attacks, being unfamiliar with fighting against something like Crescent Rose.

"Slippery little...stand still will you!"

"Keep it up Ruby!" Yang and Nora were on their feet cheering.

Be it frustration or a loss of stamina, Cardin's attack went wider then expected, leaving his guard open. He noticed it instantly, a look of horror on his face.

"Do it Ruby!" Weiss shouted, seeing the opening. Ruby didn't need to be told twice. With a blast of her scythe and a cloud of roses, Ruby zipped in close, delivering a diagonal slash that separated Cardin from his weapon, and drove his aura into the red.

Glynda signaled the end. "And that's the match! Stand down, both of you" Ruby stowed her weapon and turned to the cheers of team RWBY and JNPR with a smile and a wave, while Cardin's face was filled with Rage. He didn't go for any sort of sucker punch or vengeance though, fearful of whatever reprisal professor Goodwitch would have in store for him. He stopped off with
"Well done Ms. Rose."

"Thanks!" Ruby returned to her team in the stands, and was instantly drawn into a crushing hug by Yang.

"That was textbook sis! Way to kick his ass"

"Yang!"

"She's right, that was very well done, Ruby."

"Thanks Pyrrha."

"Anyone else notice?"

"Notice what, Blake?"

"Professor Goodwitch's death grip on her crop. I swear she had her eyes locked to you the entire fight"

"Understandable I guess, was my first fight here, and our previous meeting was well, you know when. Given what happened at initiation, I can see her being a bit watchful"

"Well said, Ruby" She smiled at Ren.

Glynda clapped to get the classes attention. "That's all we have for today, students, remember to keep up with your readings on the Vale bylaws for duels and duel etiquette. Class dismissed"

The students got up and filed out, Cardin sending one last death glare toward RWBY and JNPR on his way out, which both teams ignored.

"So what's next on the agenda?" Yang still had Ruby in a one armed hug.

"Free period/physical training till dinner. Anyone have any plans?"

"Nothing much, Yang. "Jaune said, checking his schedule, "Just a bit of PT till dinner. Thinking of hitting the pool for laps actually."

"Oh? Count us in, been dying to check it out." Yang said, eyes sparkling. "Bet you can't wait to see your partner in a swimsuit, can you Jaune?"

He couldn't deny it, after all the suits Beacon issued were quite sporty, not to mention tight. He tried his best to hide it though, "I've got seven sisters Yang, not my first trip to this rodeo."

"Normally I'd be against Yang deciding for us, but this does sound like fun." Weiss crossed her arms and nodded her affirmation.

"They have beacon swim caps, right?"

"Sure do, Blake. Worried about your hair?"
"Something like that, Yang. In that case, count me in as well. You remembered to reserve the lanes right?"

"We have indeed" Pyrrha said, double checking her scroll.

"Alright then ladies, gentlemen, let's go stow our weapons and hit the water!" Yang threw up another fist, as did Nora.

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A short time later the teams arrived back at their dorms, to the sound of Jaune and Ruby's scrolls chiming with a message. The respective team leader stopped as soon as they read it.

"What's that, Sis?"

"It's...Ozpin. He wants me and Jaune to meet him, he must have come to a decision."

"Yeah, mine says the same."

"So, no pool time fun then?" Yang and Nora looked quite dejected.

"Says here the meeting isn't till after dinner, so we should be ok. Right Ruby?"

"Looks that way Jaune. We should still be good for afternoon PT".

"Pools back on! Lets go Ladies!" Yang enthusiastically opened the dorm, dragging her partner behind her.

"Wait till you see it Ren, our suits our so cute!"

"I'm sure they are, Nora."

Jaune nodded to Ruby, and both went to go get changed.

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"Jaune Arc ether has an iron will or he's a eunuch. It's the only explanation I have."

Teams JNPR and RWBY where enjoying dinner at their regular venue, in other words, Beacon's dining hall. Seeing as Jaune and Ren had gone to fetch dessert for several of their friends and themselves, conversation had taken a juicy turn.

"Now now, be nice sis. Jaune was just being a gentlemen as was Ren, it was quite sweet"
"Still, we were killer out there, Ruby. Heck, it was a regular parade of hard bodied youths in skin tight swimsuits, dripping with water, flustered with exertion. And that was just us! How could they not react to that? Every other guy was drooling over us, and even a few of the girls."

"Actually, they did check us out." Blake said in between bites of a tuna melt.

"Oh?" Yang couldn't wait to hear this.

"They did?" Pyrrha and Nora shared a look before leaning in.

"Indeed they did, Jaune was a bit more overt about it than Ren however. But it was just a glance here and there, more professional courtesy than anything. They tended to keeps their eyes up and largely fixed on their partners.

"Well yeah, where else would Ren look? Not that we are together together or anything." Nora took another bite, and her eyes narrowed. "No seriously, where?"

"Down girl, no one is going after Ren here." Yang sipped at her drink, "still, Jaune surprised me, and not just because of his fixed focus. He's actually quite fit, not as buff as some of the guys, and there were some tasty morsels in that regard, but nice."

"Now girls, should we really be talking about them like this? They are our friends and teammates" Pyrrha's blush betrayed her actual feelings, Jaune's and Ren's appearance had not escaped her notice or approval.

"Says the girl who had no problem getting her partners attention, so to speak" Yang said with a wink to Pyrrha. Pyrrha responded by reaching for her glass to hide her growing blush.

Weiss took a sip, "I agree with Pyrrha here. Can we move onto what's important?"

"You two are no fun. Anyways, yeah, what's our plan? We know the headmaster spoke to dad, so he must know a bit. Do we just wait and see?" Yang poked at her food.

That line of conversation was derailed by the return of Ren and Jaune. "So what we miss?" They handed out the various goodies as ordered, and sat back down.

"Oh nothing lady killer, just a bit of a chat about you, Ren, and self control".

Jaune set his tray down, "I told you, seven sisters. I'm used to their teasing, their friends teasing, and so on. You get used to it after a while". That was his excuse anyways, it had actually taken an iron will to keep his eyes off the girls around him. Beacon was a parade of supermodels turned huntresses, or so it appeared to him. It was going to be a rough four years if this kept up, but damn if he wasn't ready for the challenge, or so he told himself. Ren had of course, simply used his semblance, it was handy for more then just grimm.

"I believe Jaune was referring to the meeting, we've little time to prepare." Jaune nodded in thanks for the line he'd thrown by Ren, though he thought it was a bit self serving, Ren after all had as much to lose from that previous line of conversation.

"Well", Ruby took a sip of milk, "We know he knows something, so I figure we let him lead, and do our best. When in doubt, let me answer, i've been at this longer after all."
"Sounds good to me." Jaune said, thumbs up.

"You've got the easy part, so of course it sounds good to you Jaune. But don't sweat it sis, you got this. You're our fearless leader after all."

Conversation floated back to more mundane, and less secretive topics. And more teasing of the boys, Yang wasn't going to let that go.

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The elevator ride up to the headmasters office was excessively long, if you asked Ruby. Jaune and her had a bet going that it was like this on purpose, to unnerve anyone called up to his office, Ozpin probably had a switch for that or something.

"Alright Ruby, we ready for this? I mean, I'm confident that we are, just want to check. You know, to be sure."

"Honestly, I think so? I mean, I know mostly what dad and him spoke about, and I brought all the stuff’ Ruby tapped her pack. "Lets just play it by ear here."

"Right...right. Play it by ear, lets do that". Jaune was not the picture of confidence as the elevator finally arrived at it's destination, the doors opening to a large office, with gears everywhere, and two figures at a desk, the headmaster, and standing beside him one Glynda Goodwitch.

"Ms. Rose, Mr. Arc, please have a seat." Jaune and Ruby shared a look, and one deep breath later, they walked across the rather spacious office and sat down opposite the headmaster. "I trust you both know why you are here?"

"It's about the request Ruby and I made, for the training area filled with deadly grimm. Or regular grimm, if you have any of those. Passive grimm would be nice too."

"I don't think they make those, Jaune." Ruby sweat dropped at her friend and fellow leader. Glynda simply stared at him.

"Relax Mr. Arc, there is no need to be nervous here. We are indeed here to discuss that matter." Ruby and Jaune looked to be on the edge of their seats waiting for the reply.

"But before that, we do have some concerns to discuss." Jaune and Ruby returned to sitting normally. "While I commend you for your initiative and restraint, these abilities, they represent a significant risk that must be mitigated. I will not punish you for your previous actions in spreading them to team JNPR, or to your teammates in team RWBY."

"That is not to say it was not irresponsible to spread this to others you hardly knew, Ms. Rose." Glynda accented this by pointing her crop at Ruby, but lowered it after a glance from Ozpin.

"It was kind of a life or death thing, and I'm a good judge of character. At least, dad says I am. Seems to have worked out though, Weiss, Blake, and JNPR are all good people. None have blabbed about this, and they are all making great progress. I'd never invite someone I didn't feel
like I could trust, not that I have plans on spreading this any further than it is now."

"Again, you are not in any trouble for this, Ms. Rose." Ozpin Took a sip from his ever present mug. "You are following the rules set for you by your father, and I believe those rules are sound ones."

"Dad's usually are, and Uncle Qrow is a fan of them as well. Well, these rules, not so much others"

"For understandable reasons, on both counts." Ozpin continued after setting his mug down. "While you will not be punished, you will be held responsible. As team leaders, you are responsible for the actions of your teammates, as well as their training, and performance. Given these abilities, your burden has grown exponentially, as you will be held accountable for any misuse or breach of trust by your teammates on his subject. Are you prepared to assume and maintain this responsibility during your time at Beacon?"

"I won't lie and say it's not something that keeps me up at night, headmaster." Jaune took a breath, "But it is not something I will so casually toss aside. Will it be hard? Oh, i'm certain it will be the most difficult thing I've ever done, I've a hard enough time taking care of myself, let alone several others. But I think it will be worth it in the end. I've known my team a week and I already think the world of them, and if they are willing to put their trust in me, then i'm willing to do whatever to maintain that trust."

"Well said, Mr. Arc. And you Ms. Rose?"

"Well, I'm not sure what kind of leader I am yet, but I've been doing this for some time, leading the guild that is, or at least maintaining the secrecy and following the rules. Blake and Weiss are good people, and I'm willing to put in the work to keep this all going. It's my responsibility, and I don't think that I would have received this gift if someone out there didn't think I could handle it. I'll do whatever it takes to keep my team in line, grow their skills, and make them the huntresses I know they can be."

"Hmm." Ozpin visibly relaxed. "That is what we expect, and I've not seen anything in your record to suggest you'll fail in this regard." If Ozpin noticed Jaune's brief discomfort, he didn't see fit to make public it.

"I must say it was quite the interesting conversation with Professor Xiao Long, Ms. Rose. This situation is, well, not what I expected."

"Yeah, it's a bit hard to wrap one's head around. I've been at it for years, and I still surprise myself"

Glynda crossed her arms, "Surprising wouldn't even begin to describe this, Ms. Rose, it sounds like utter insanity. If not for how well we know your father, I'd not believe any of it."

"If I may ma'am, sir, I thought the same way at first. But it's true, as implausible as it may seem. Oddly, you sort of get used to it quickly though."

"Thanks, Jaune"

"No problem Ruby".

"Situations like this require a great deal of caution, for reasons we all understand. On the subject of these abilities, could you give me a brief demonstration? We have video from initiation, of course,
but I'd like to see something up close. Though I ask you not to damage my office, if possible."

"I think we can do that, or at least I can. How about you, Ruby?"

Ruby smiled, "I think I can manage. Want to go first Jaune?"

"Sure, here goes." Jaune stood up and took a few steps back from the desk. He took a breath to calm himself, and raised a hand. He drew a rune in the air and recited some now familiar words, "Strength. Potency. Power".

As light enveloped him and the a complex series of runes and a magic circle appeared above him, Ozpin's eyebrows raised Glynda for her part was wide eyed, her grip on her crop tightening.

"Impressive, Mr. Arc. Can I ask what that particular ability does?"

"Well sir, it seems to store charges of a skill, when activated it speeds up those affected and gives them a boost of strength, effects myself and the team with one cast. The last charge of it is more powerful than the previous two"

"Fascinating. You discovered this by chance?"

"Well sir, it just sort of happened while reading one day. The words stuck with me, and the was almost instinctive. Once It happened the first time, the UI told me what I needed to know, and it was much easier to do the other times."

"You mean the interface Taiyang spoke of?" Glynda having recovered from her shock, and looked upon Jaune with something more akin to cautious curiosity.

"I've not met professor Xiao Long, but yeah. It's how we view all this."

"And you Ms. Rose? Would you mind showing me one of your skills?"

"Just to clarify, nothing damaging, or too flashy, right? I'd hate to attract unwanted attention."

"I appreciate your thoughtfulness on that regard, Ms. Rose."

"Alright then, just no one scream or anything. It scares them when people do that."

"Them?" Glynda said, reaching for her crop once more.

"Yeah, one of my babies, or rather minions. Just stay calm, he'll not hurt you." Rubies eyes glowed a soft silver as she reached down with her hand. Back and green fire enveloped her arm as her arm rose, as if pulling up on some unseen chain. "Servant of mine, walk these lands!"

An apparition of green and black shadow and smoke phased into the world. It was as large as Ozpin or Glynda, and much larger then Ruby herself, and shaped somewhat like a hollow sphere like cloud. The creature had six glowing blue orbs in two semi parallel lines, which served as its eyes. The being appeared disoriented for a second till it noticed Ruby. It made a sound that would remind one of a coo, if not for coming from an otherworldly entity.

"My baby! Oh I'm sorry it's been so long, I haven't forgotten about you!" While Ruby was overjoyed to see her 'baby' again, the other occupants of the room had more mixed reactions.
Glynda had stepped back a bit, weapon raised and ready to attack, her face white. Jaune was taken back, but calm, it had been something of a crazy week since starting Beacon after all.

Ozpin was wide eyed and utterly speechless. Ruby had, every so casually, breached the veil of reality, reached into another otherworldly realm, and brought forth a creature from that place. He wondered if she fully comprehended what she had done here, or it's implications.

It was Glynda who spoke first. Well, more panicky cried out more than anything. "What..what in the gods names is that thing!?!"

"Oh him?" Ruby said, accepting what would pass for a hug from the being, if it had arms. "This is my shadow fiend. Or that's what the UI calls him, I call him Bubbles. Say hi, Bubbles!" The being let loose a sound that was both cheerful and chilling, at the same time.

"Is it dangerous?"

"Not unless you're a grimm."

Glynda was unconvinced. "Is that thing a grimm?"

"No, I do not think so, Glynda. It lacks the maleficence the enemy has. This is, well, something far different." Ozpin studied the creature, and to it's credit, it appeared to be doing the same to him. Seeing as it appeared to be making no hostile movements, Glynda relaxed, but kept the desk between herself and it.

"Incredible. Mr. Arc's skill was impressive, but this..are you aware of what you have done, Ms. Rose?"

"Well from what I understand, I pierced the fabric of reality, reached into the beyond, and pulled Bubbles here over. Easy as breakfast."

Ozpin stood corrected, Ruby did understand what she had done, and that honestly frightened him a bit.

"So, your dog ate one of these?" Jaune waved to Bubbles, who sort of vibrated back at him.

"No no, Zwei ate one of the others."

"Do the others look like this as well?"

"Nah" Ruby said to Ozpin, "They look less like a shadowy thing, more like horrific abominations of flesh and bone. They are really sweet though! Well, so long as you aren't a grimm. Once watched a pack of jagged horrors rip an Ursa limb from limb, Yang looked like she was about to throw up." Ruby giggled at the memory, to the blank stares of the others present. "Yeah, you kind of had to be there".

"I'll...take your word on that, Ms. Rose." Ozpin dreaded seeing such creatures only slightly less than Glynda did. "Both of your abilities are quite impressive. Your father said there is an interface that helps you control them, and you've both mentioned that before as well. What exactly does it look like?"

Ruby pulled out her scroll, and typed in an elaborate password. "I can show you if you'd like,
professor. Um, do you have some sort of projector? We brought slides."

While Ruby went through the same slides the guild had seen previously, Glynda and Ozpin took notes. Jaune, not having much to say, was attempting to play with Ruby's minion, who was responding quite playfully. Well, as playfully as a large shadow monster can.

"And these bags can store much more than normal?" Glynda asked, reviewing her list of questions. "How much more?"

Ruby reached into her bag, and carefully laid a tree trunk down on the office floor. "Way more. It's very handy, really."

"I can imagine." Glynda's mind was awash in possibilities. Ozpin however was carefully examining one of the inscriptions used in crafting. He could feel the magic in it, and connected it to the power he had sensed in his first meeting with the young huntress before him. Things were starting to become clear.

"These are made from grimm materials?"

"Yep, it's one of the major bonuses for killing them."

"Can I keep this one? I'd like to examine it further."

"Sure, I've plenty of those. I can even give you a few of the raw materials it came from if you'd like." She pulled out a small dowel of wood, a small ingot of metal, and a beowolf claw and set them on Ozpin's desk.

"Thank you, I'll return them once my analysis is finished." Ozpin had a few ideas on how these combined to produce the effect, but he'd need to search his personal archives to be sure. It had been a long time since he'd seen anything like this. A very, very long time.

"Just to confirm, which professions are your teammates, Ms. Rose?" Glynda said, readying her pen.

Ruby flipped back to the slide with professions on it, "I'm a Reaper, it's this one here. Yang is a Berserker, Weiss a Weaver, and Blake a Chronomancer." Ruby helpfully pointed to each one.

"And your team, Mr. Arc?" Jaune stopped himself from throwing a pencil, as he was attempting to teach the minion to play fetch. Bubbles was quite disappointed to have their game interrupted.

"Oh, ah, I'm a Firebrand, Ren's a Soulbeast, Nora a Scrapper, and Pyrrha is a Herald."

"And myself and the headmaster?"

"Well" Ruby said, pointing to two of the symbols without names. "Says here you are this one, the flame looking icon. The headmaster is the one that looks kind of like an eye."

"And you don't know what abilities those possess?"

"Nope, we only know what a guild member already has, and only because they told us what it's called and what it does."

Ozpin took a few minutes to think as Glynda and Ruby continued their conversation, and Jaune
attempted to resist "Bubbles" attempts to get him to restart their game. Giant shadow monsters were quite persistent it seemed.

What concerned Ozpin the most was he had no idea who exactly this Dwayna was who started this, though he had a faint feeling he'd heard the name before. That this figure had handed such a powerful ability and responsibility to a small child defied any explanation he could think of. Something about Ruby made the risk worth pursuing, and Ozpin felt he'd have to expand his net of research if he wanted to get to the bottom of it. Ozpin checked the time, and decided it was time indeed to move this meeting along.

"You've certainly given me a lot to think about, Ms. Rose, and Mr. Arc, but I believe I had called you here to discuss a certain arrangement, did I not?" Conversations stopped, and suddenly all attention was on the headmaster, even Bubbles had all his eyes on Ozpin. Jaune and Ruby were again on the edge of their seats in anticipation.

"I believe we can work out an arrangement for your respective teams to use the Emerald Forest training areas, provided you agree to several conditions."

Ruby looked excited but puzzled, "What sort of conditions?"

"First, know that we will be recording these training events, stored heavily encrypted mind you, so that we can monitor your progress and ensure your safety, or at least ensure it as much as one can when training in a grimm filled forest."

"I think we can work with that, right Ruby?"

"We expected as much, so yeah that works."

"Second, you will refrain from further guild 'invites' without notifying us prior to extending any membership. There is a great security risk in this spreading to individuals whom, well, would not have the well being of others in mind."

"Trust me, that's not something we want to see ether. Count this as us in agreement as well" Ruby said with a nod.

"There is the issue of supervision as well. At Signal, you were under the supervision of your father, and your uncle, and I would like similar supervision of your activities while at Beacon. I am referring mainly to training activities, as well as a liaison to the academy, should you need anything of Beacon or it's resources. I assure you, no word of your activities will be discussed outside present company, your uncle, or your father."

[Jaune to Ruby: Oversight, eh? Should have seen that coming. What do you think?]

[Ruby to Jaune: I don't think we have much a choice here]

"This liaison would be advisory, correct? You won't take the reigns or control of the guild away from me, right?"

"Given you've been at this the longest, Ms. Rose, I don't think anyone else has the experience necessary to manage it. Not to mention, the ability to invite or presumably remove members falls to you alone."
"How would we communicate with them? Regular reports or such?"

"To answer that question Mr. Arc, I would like Ms. Rose to extend membership to the guild to a liaison."

"You want me to invite you to the guild?"

"No Ms. Rose, There are...potential complications with my membership. People would notice the headmaster sneaking off to train, not to mention political implications should the public learn of the existence of the guild. The person I would like you to invite is Professor Goodwitch."

"Oh, I guess that makes more sense. A professor getting in side training wouldn't raise any alarm, but wouldn't students notice her training with us? I mean, It would look like favoritism."

"Very astute Mr. Arc. I've got a plan for that, should Ms. Rose agree to the stipulation."

Ruby thought for a moment. She had created the guild to have a separate place for her and Yang outside of the guild with Dad and Uncle Qrow. Added the professor would mean a certain loss of privacy, though they could still use group or private chat. On the upside, she was a super cool if strict huntress, and that could come in handy, much as Dad and Qrow had been on some hunts back on patch. In the end, the guild would come out ahead. Ruby had the foresight to warn them, however.

[Ruby: Alright Roses, The headmaster agreed to give us access, but it comes at a cost, we have to add Professor Goodwitch to the guild as a liaison/beacon oversight.]

[Yang: Seriously? Way to be a buzzkill, Ozpin.]

[Blake: At least it's not Oobleck]

[Nora: Or Port.]

[Weiss: I don't think I'd be able to handle Port. At least Goodwitch is competent and skilled.]

[Ruby: So no objections?]

[Jaune: None here, though we'll have to watch what we say from now on.]

[Blake: and how we act. But I'm in agreement.]

[Pyrrha: I'm fine with this as well, I think we could learn a lot from her.]

[Nora: More the merrier!]

[Ren: No objections here.]

[Yang: your call sis, I'm with you either way.]

[Weiss: A teacher among us may be handy, so go for it.]

Glynda and Ozpin stared at Ruby and Jaune during their telepathic conversation. Bubbles moved on from trying to play with Jaune, to trying to play with Glynda, who was none too pleased, trying
to keep the creature away from arms length by using her crop as a buffer.

"Alright, The guild is okay with the stipulation. Are you ready, Professor Goodwitch?"

Glynda turned from Bubbles to face Ruby. "As ready as can be expected, how exactly does this work."

"Oh, just press accept on the dialog box"

"What dialog box?"

"This one" Ruby said, firing off the invite. Glynda's eyes went wide at the sight of it.

"What do you see. Glynda?"

"Headmaster, there is a...floating menu in front of me, like a hologram. I just use my hands and touch it, right?"

"Yep, go for it" Ruby gave a thumbs up, as did Jaune. Ozpin focused all his attention on Glynda.

Glynda touched accept, and after a brief flash of violet light, the UI appeared before her vision. Glynda looked lost at first, trying to take in all the new information she was seeing.

"It's just like the presentation said, I see a user interface, levels, all kinds of information. This is rather incredible." Glynda reached out, trying to touch the various elements.

Jaune shrugged, "Eh, you get used to it after a while, in no time it becomes almost second nature to use it."

[Ruby: Alright everyone, say welcome to our newest member, Professor Goodwitch!]

[Yang: Welcome to the Noble Roses!]

[Pyrrha: Welcome professor]

[Weiss: Welcome to the guild professor Goodwitch]

[Jaune: Welcome, professor]

[Blake: Hello and Welcome]

[Ren: Glad to have you with us, professor]

[Nora: Boop! Welcome to the Roses!]

"How Do I respond? The students are messaging me, Headmaster and without the use of a scroll. The possibilities of this are...well grand."

"Oh, to type just think about what you want to say and the channel name."

[Glynda: Thank you..am I doing this right?]
"So, what class are you, check the pane over here." Ruby brought up the appropriate slide.

After a few seconds of attempting to navigate the UI, Glynda at last located the information. "According to this, I'm an 'Elementalist'".

"Awesomesauce! Let me add that to the list." Ruby typed in the profession name in her list of professions, bringing the known total up to eleven.

"Now that that's done, I believe it's time to recess for now, as I'm sure you have your studies to attend to. Glynda will be in touch with you in the morning about the exact schedule for the availability of the training areas requested, and I'd like some sort of formal training plan on your side as well. Thank you very much for being accommodating, Ms. Rose, Mr. Arc."

"It was our pleasure, and thank you so much! Team RWBY is in your debt!" Ruby stood up, and shook the hands of the headmaster and Glynda, who was still in a state of bewilderment.

"Thanks, on behalf of team JNPR we greatly appreciate this. Oh, on a related note, Nora was wondering if you could help her acquire a few things. Nothing illegal, mind you, just a bit hard to get. We think it's due to her profession trying to get her to construct something. We'll pay the cost of any of the materials" Jaune brought up a list of items on his scroll, and handed it to Glynda, who showed it to Ozpin.

"Nothing appears to be too exotic, but I can see why you'd need our help in acquiring these. I believe I can requisition these for you, so long as you inform Professor Goodwitch as to what exactly they are for once completed."

"I don't think that will be a problem, thank you Headmaster, professor."

"Ms. Rose, would you mind if I keep a copy of that presentation? I believe it will come in handy for Glynda's orientation, as well as my own research."

"Oh? Okay, I guess, let me transfer it to you. Just be sure to keep it safe, Dad and Uncle Qrow really impressed upon me the importance of that"

"I'll hold it in the strictest confidence."

"Anything else we can do for you?"

"I believe that will be all for now., so please enjoy the rest of your evening."

"Alright then, shall we be off Jaune?"

"Sure, sounds good, thank you again."

"See you around too, Bubbles" Jaune waved to the minion, who rushed to give him one last 'hug'.

"Nighty night Bubbles, I'll bring you out again soon, okay?" The minion was sad, but acknowledge the sentiment with a hug to Ruby as well. Ruby waved a green and black fire covered hand, and her minion retreated through a shadowy ripple back into the realm it had spawned from. Ruby and Jaune waved again, and disappeared into the elevator.
"I'll get to work on the training ground availability and scheduling as soon as I'm back in my office. Do you need anything else, headmaster?"

"No Glynda, you've done well. Learn what you can, and don't be afraid to contact Ms. Rose if you have questions, I'm sure she is expecting them. I've got a lot of research myself to do, what I've seen has given me at least some idea of where to begin looking. As for our cover story, leave it to me, I'll announce it in the morning."

"Very good then. Good evening, Ozpin"

"Good evening, Glynda"

As Glynda left the office, Ozpin took a few minutes to review the evening. It had been a long time since a mystery such as this had landed on his lap, and he felt it would be quite the welcomed challenge to discover it's full meaning. The awakening process had been fascinating, akin to unlocking aura in it's effects. Glynda had changed before his eyes, but after the fact he could see the traces of power had always been there. Whatever the exact process, it was beautiful in it's simplicity, elegant in its efficiency, and wildly complex in it's exact mechanics. It was different from the creation or transference of maiden powers, but had similarly pronounced effect on the individual. Who or what could have the power to so imbibe the population at large, and hide it so skillfully was an enigma.

Ozpin gathered up the materials Ruby had left him and locked them in a secure case for transport, and filed all evidence of the nights meeting away under the best security and encryption he had, normally reserved for information pertaining to the maidens and Salem. He gathered his case, and headed for his personal quarters, It was going to be a long night.

He nearly tripped on the way out, and noticed that he'd forgotten to have Ruby put away the tree trunk she had deposited in his office earlier in the evening. Ozpin took a sip of coffee and idly wondered how he'd explain that one to the janitor.
Ruby Rose could not help herself from dancing to the music blaring from her headphones as she worked. The RWBY dorm was like most evenings, a hive of activity. Yang was busy with homework desperately trying to finish up a report that the rest of the team had already completed, Yang's tardiness being due to spending some time with her friends that past weekend. Blake was working on her crafting having taken up artificing, with a book on dust chemistry in one hand and a desk full of misc vials, ambles, and other equipment. A Violet concoction was brewing, and her desk also bore stacks of notes sent by Taiyang on artificing, as well as a few test attempts at sigils that Blake had been practicing. Weiss was working on hers as well, having declared herself the teams jeweler, and was busy grinding down some dust crystals and grimm components for use in some rings she was working on.

Ruby was hard at work at her sewing machine, putting the final touches on Weiss's new outfit, which had come along quite nicely in her opinion. The dress was a white button up with short sleeves and a pleated skirt with flashes of blue that went down to mid thigh, with black frill accents along the hemlines, along with wrist length white gloves and blue stockings. The craftsmanship and initial fit had met with Weiss's approval, and Ruby needed to just finish an accent here and there and it would be complete.

Blake had commissioned an outfit as well, though she had explicitly denied Ruby's request to make her a combat skirt as well, instead insisting on a pair of hip hugging pants, the spoilsport. Work on it was a bit slower, given that Ruby hadn't had much experience in making women's pants, having previously only made such things for Taiyang and Qrow though only for their casual use, both being heavy armor professions. The rest was easy enough though, a top that resembled a short sleeved zip up jacket with black accents on the bottom and along the bust line as well as her shoulders and arms. Instead of gloves the outfit had ribbon wrapped around the arms from wrist to the bottom of the sleeves in a criss-cross pattern, The top left a daring amount of cleavage on display, as well as her midriff, something that had surprised Ruby when the design was pitched, but it met with Blake's approval as well as Yang's, her sister being a fan of the 'flaunt it if you got it' school of huntress outfit design.

Both outfits would be done in time for the weeks big event: The guilds first Emerald Forest training session that Thursday. All last weekend had been spent in preparation, with trips to vale and even patch to retrieve needed supplies and materials, as well as making the requested training schedules and answering a slew of questions from Professor Goodwitch. JNPR had submitted their own training plans, but had spent some time in vale on a team outing, something Ruby was feeling the need to organize for RWBY in the very near future.

Ruby couldn't wait to get back into the field, her reaper skills were itching for a solid workout, and she could tell the rest of the guild was equally chomping at the bit to cut loose. Even professor Goodwitch looked excited by the prospect, not that she let up on strict and stern visage during class. She had called on a few other guild members in class as well, with Nora, Yang, and Pyrrha getting to fight, with victories in their respective matches. Jaune was having a rough time, his sparring, according to Pyrrha, being quite haphazard, with his passive effects being quite apparent at times. Ruby and Pyrrha hoped some time against actual grimm, and being able to more openly experiment with his skills, would help in that regard. Weiss was doing well, as was Ren, and both could expect to fight in the near term. Blake was sadly like Jaune, and kept activating her own
skills or effects instinctively. Yang was working with her partner closely to bring them under control.

Ruby checked the time as her headphones switched over to a new song, noting that JNPR was due within the hour for a special event: the guilds first training on bonding sigils, runes, insignias and inscriptions. Most were bringing along modified or newly crafted weapons to see the process hands on, the materials for many of them supplied from the Guild's stockpiles. They would repay Ruby and Yang once they got into the forest and could loot them from the grim. Some had been acquired that way from initiation as well. Ruby made sure a few of the raw materials had been unprocessed so Yang and her could demonstrate the creation of the upgrade and enchanting components. Glynda would be on hand for the demonstration, bringing along a new weapon she'd created, and Ozpin had requested to watch via streaming video to his office.

"Finished! Seriously, can Oobleck assign any more homework?" Yang shut her notebook and threw her hands into the air in victory. "So what's on the agenda now?"

"We'll have company soon, can you double check the upgrades work area?" Ruby said, not looking up from her sewing.

"Already? Time flies when doing mind numbing essays I guess".

"No arguments there." Blake added a few drops of liquefied fire dust to her mixture. "By the way, is it suppose to look like this?"

"Purple eh? Making a potion of avian grimm slaying?"

"According to your dad's recipe book, yes."

"Does it smell like cotton candy?"

Blake wafted her hand over the mixture and sniffed. "Oddly, yes."

"Then you mixed it correctly."

"I guess that explains the notes next to the recipes, I thought they were referring to the coloration not their smells."

"Let me guess, others smell like brownies, cookies, candy canes, etc right?" Weiss hadn't even looked up from her task while listing off scents.

Blake looked down the list and nodded, "Actually yeah. How did you know?"

"Because if the UI was designed for a child's mind, then why not magic potions? Those scents would be easily recognized and easy to memorize, more so than PH levels or precise formulation."

"Reasonable enough. I see recipes for pretty much every main type of grimm here, as well as bandits and huntsmen? Suppose whoever designed this clearly designed it with a purpose."

"Right-o Blake! It's honestly really cool, you pop a tube, chug it down, and blam, instant power boost versus a specific enemy. It's saved our bacon a few times." Yang resisted the urge to pat Blake on the back, fearful of spilling anything, instead settling for a thumbs up as she walked over to the desk holding the supplies for the nights demonstration, as well as the team's general use. The
team's desks, much like JNPR's across the hall, were pulling double duty as places to craft and places to study. Space was at a premium in the room, but neither team really had a solution to the problem.

"Just a few…more…stitches…done!" Ruby sat back, at last finished with her sewing. Now she just had to enchant it, and it would be complete and ready for use. "Weiss! Come over here and try it on again, I want to see how it fits now."

"Oh, okay. I'm pretty much done here as well, just need to mount the crystalline dust, and 'fuse' it to the ring, as you so eloquently put it. I'm looking forward to seeing how Pyrrha's amulet turns out, she's bringing it over for the meeting, she sounded proud of it in chat.

"If it's anything like her normal tastes, I'm sure it's lovely!" Ruby honestly loved seeing her fellow guild mates creations. Much like weapons, you could tell a lot about someone by the way they crafted. Granted, this wasn't exclusive to guild crafting, but something she found in normally produced works as well.

Weiss set down her tools, and walked over to Ruby, who enthusiastically handed her the finished dress and sent her to change in the bathroom with a pat on her back. Normally Weiss would have changed then and there, but they were expecting company, and guild mates or not, Weiss was not going to give Jaune and Ren a show.

The women of team RWBY finished up their projects for the evening, and prepared to receive their guests. Ruby joined Yang in setting up for the demonstration, while Weiss did general room cleanup, and Blake double checked to make sure that her and Weiss's weapons were ready and laid out. While Blake was in the process of forging an entirely new weapon, she'd yet to complete it, and so had made some small modifications to Gambol Shroud to prepare it for enchantment.

At the appointed time, a knock sounded on the dorm room door, which was soon opened by an every cheerful Ruby to reveal team JNPR as well as Professor Goodwitch.

"Good evening JNPR, Professor!" Ruby stood aside and motioned for them to enter. "Please please, come on in, we are all ready here."

"Sorry for the intrusion!" Pyrrha said, ever chipper as she walked in. She was quickly followed by her teammates, who exchanged their own greetings and moved to sit down, or in the case of Jaune and Nora, set down their new and modified weapons, respectively.

"Interesting bed configuration you have here. " Glynda said, eyeing the hazardous looking bunk beds team RWBY had built.

Ruby sweat dropped, "Eh, they are far more stable than you'd think, given their appearance. But be sure to sit on the bottom bunks, just to be sure." Glynda nodded, taking Ruby's word for it. The professor had brought along a new weapon of her own, a new silver and leather crop that was noticeably larger than her previous one, looking much more like a scepter or wand. She kept it close to hand as she pulled out her scroll, firing off a message to the headmaster and setting it up for the nights broadcast, which would be securely routed to the headmaster's own quarters.

Everyone took their seats, and Ruby called the guild to order with a clap. "Good evening Roses! The purpose of this little get together is to show you how the enchanting process works, from material creation to application."
"It's actually way simple. First and probably the funnest, you kill some grimm to get these things" Yang said, motioning to a pile of miscellaneous grimm materials like a model at a car show. "Each one has a different effect on the stats for a weapon or piece of armor. Most have a mix of effects, so you sort of chose what compliments your overall goal. We took the liberty of writing these out for you, so you can decide what you want for each of your weapons. Once you pick, we'll make some inscriptions to apply." While Yang was talking, Ruby handed out some handwritten pages with a list of enchantments and what skills they offered.

The guild took a few minutes to go over the options, and within no time they picked what they thought would be the most handy fore their fighting styles. Ruby and Yang retrieved the necessary ingredients, and then got to work. Grinding up scales, claws or bone, diluting blood and venom with water were necessary, and other tasks as the guild took notes, asked questions, and tried their hands at the various steps. Once the ingredients had been properly prepared, they dipped the dowels into the concoctions, and channeled a bit of aura into it, and then watched in awe as the dowels absorbed the compounds, and pictographic symbols representing their stat combination appeared on them.

"See? It's easy! Materials for armor work the same way, except you use cloth instead of wood. For really powerful stuff, you have to embroider the cloth or inscribe the pictograms on some metal bonded to the dowels. The stronger the grimm the materials came from, the stronger the enchantment as well." Ruby held up the end results, a smile beaming with pride on her face.

"You know, I thought imbibing stuff with magical essence would be, you know, more difficult." Weiss shrugged.

"I know right? First time Ruby did it, the rest fo the family was just dumbstruck. But sure enough, that's all there was too it." Yang gave her sister a pat on the back, and a smile.

"There is actually historical references to similar processes." The guild directed their attention to the scroll Glynda was holding up, the headmasters face on screen. "The biggest difficulty has always been obtaining grimm materials, which are quite rare, with most grimm dissipating too quickly to harvest materials, not to mention their inherent danger. The bonding process was different however, more involved. It was thought to be rendered obsolete in the face of modern dust weaving and dust alloy manufacturing."

"Really? I've love to read anything you have on that, may shed some light on new processes to try or formulas." Blake was a sucker for a good read, as as RWBY's artificer, it would come in handy.

"I'd be happy to share some of what I've found Ms Belladonna, so long as you restrict your reading to appropriate venues."

"Oh! Count me in as well. I've been working on some stuff myself. Mostly with dust and such though, rather than grimm bits. Professor Peach has been a big help with that side of things." Nora had been spending nearly as much time in Peach's office as she had in the workshop.

"Professor Peach is one of the best in Remnant when it comes to dust. You should not be afraid to leverage the other professors when appropriate, though be discrete about guild matters."

"Thanks Professor Goodwitch! Granted, once we get out into the field it may be us in the teaching position and you the student." Yang stood tall and patted herself on the chest. Glynda had to admit she was correct in that regard.
"So how do we bond these things to our weapons?"

"Great question! Ok, everyone pick up your dowels, and place it on the surface of your weapon."

Ruby watched as Nora, Weiss, Blake, Glynda and Jaune did as requested.

"Alright now channel a bit of aura into it, the dowel that is, and it will do the rest."

All but Jaune did this with ease, and watched as the dowel melted into the surface of the weapon, leaving only a small pictograph in its wake, etched into the surface. Noticing Jaune's frustration, Pyrrha placed her hand on his.

"Here, let me help you, I know you're still having issues controlling your aura." Jaune gave her a bit of an embarrassed smile as she channeled her aura, and together they applied the inscription to his new sword.

"See, easy! Now those with separate weapons or shields may need to do the same to both one handed weapons, while those with larger weapons like Nora or myself only have to do it once. The total stats will be the same either way. Clothing you kind of have to apply to each piece as well, so it requires way more materials over all."

"And the runes and such?"

"Oh those you sort of slot in, they fuse to the surface, and you can actually remove them later to swap out, provided you have the right tools." Yang held up a tool somewhat resembling a pair of scooping pliers.

"Wow, it feels different now, I can feel it having an effect as soon as I put my hands on it. It's just like with the armor I got from initiation" Jaune held up his new sword, and gently waved it a bit, careful to not hit himself or any of the others.

"Crafted items and drops have similar stats too, just in different combination. Pretty much anything that drops can be recreated stats wise, it just won't have the unique look."

Glynda gave her new wand a few test waves. "Perhaps whoever is creating the dropped items is constructing them with a similar process."

Yang nodded, "Uncle Qrow said the same thing once. Though the materials may be a bit exotic, they are made from stuff found somewhere on Remnant. Even the funny crystal stuff or Grimm bone items are still chemical similar, if not ripped directly from somewhere. Or at least, that's what we think."

"Analysis of some of the items could reveal their point of origin, and in turn, something about who is running things behind the scene."

Ruby shook her head, "Dad tried that with some of the equipment at Signal. For the most part, they appear to use materials from the region they dropped, so the things we found on patch appeared to be from Patch, as strange as it sounds. Try as we might, we were never able to find any secret forges or workshops in our exploration of our home island."

"Nor has Uncle Qrow seen anything on his travels" Added Yang.
Ozpin sat back in his chair and considered this, it was just one more enigma to unravel. He'd need to contact Qrow and see just where and how he had been searching. Perhaps Glynda could reach him, as the CCTS was limited in coverage at the best of times.

The rest on the meeting continued along these lines, with the guild applying various runes to their weapons, and Ruby demonstrating clothing enchantment by helping Weiss and Blake apply some to their newly tailored outfits, where completed.

"So, when we want to make the enchanting stuff, we need to come over to your dorm, yes? Won't that be a bother?"

"For now, that's correct Ren." Ruby said, "Most of the stuff is fairly mundane though, like the pots and tongs and such. The grinder was a bit expensive but otherwise available. We hope to get your team and the professor your own sets however, so you can work on your own schedules"

"Leave that to us, Ms Rose. I'm sure we have most of this in stock already in fact, I'll have it delivered to the JNPR dorm as soon as possible"

Jaune perked up at that, "Thank you headmaster! Also thanks for getting Nora her stuff so quickly as well, she's been working like crazy on...something. Well, several things actually, I'm really looking forward to seeing them in action. Or you know, actually finding out what they do"

"Oh, you are so going to see them once we hit the forest! I'm so taking those puppies out for a spin. It's going to be awesome!" Nora was sparkly eyed at all the wonderful toys she'd been working on.

Pyrrha noted the time on her scroll. "On that note, we should probably retire for the night, seeing as we have class and all tomorrow."

"We'll have plenty of time to test the modified or new weapons and armor out shortly," Blake nodded in agreement with Pyrrha.

"I think we are done, so yeah that sounds like a plan." Yang turned to Glynda, "Anything you'd like to add Professor?"

"Only that I agree with Ms. Nikos and Ms. Belladonna. Remember to report in field kit to elevator six this Thursday, 14:00 hours. Feel free to wear your new items or weapons, so long as you don't have anything too outlandish. Additional supplies for our little cover story will be distributed at that time"

"Sounds good to me. Alright Roses, that wraps it up for tonight, be sure to gather your things and look forward to Thursday, it's going to be quite the thing."

The JNPR and Glynda gathered their weapons and leftover enchanting materials, said their goodnights and filed out to return to their own rooms. Everyone looked forward to stretching their legs and getting some practical experience with their professions and their new kit.

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At long last, Thursday had come around, and Ruby could feel the electricity in the air as teams RWBY and JNPR walked to the designated staging area for their first trip into the forest since initiation. Weiss and Blake were wearing their new outfits, with Blake attracting quite a few gazes from her fellow students, not that she acknowledged any of them. Yang had donned a favorite outfit of hers, a short sleeved, zipped up bodysuit with short bottoms, camouflaged in color and covered in small rivets that spoke of the brigandine armor plates expertly fitted to her bodies natural curves. It was partially unzipped in the front showing off her yellow tube top, for reasons of the heat that day or so Yang claimed. Ruby was wearing an outfit not too dissimilar from her normal black huntress outfit, save for the light gray top.

Most of JNPR had worn their standard kit, save for the weapons and gear they had received from initiation and the modified weapons they had enchanted a few days ago. Pyrrha had brought along a black and gold variant of her own weapons, a prize earned from her PVP track rewards as well as her black set of reward armor. Nora's boots were adorned with strapped on cylinders which resembled small jet nozzles and vials. A pair of intricate lensed goggles rested on her brow ready to be lowered onto her eyes once in the field.

Everyone in RWBY and JNPR were wearing their new packs, eager to fill them with loot and materials from the day's activities.

"Oh man, this is going to be so cool! I can wait to get down to business here" Ruby was literally bouncing as the team walked.

"Oh yes, deadly grimm! Random craziness! Death behind every tree and blade of grass! What's not to love!??"

"Isn't it great!??" Yang put an arm around Weiss's shoulders, "I knew you'd be down with this, Weisscream."

Blake raised an eye while popping her knuckles. "I believe that was sarcasm, Yang."

"Thank you! I thought I was the only sane person here for a second."

"I'm actually with Ruby and Yang here, I'm looking forward to cutting loose and seeing what I can do." Blake also had plans for any money she'd earn, with a deluxe box set of a certain book series in mind. Weiss threw up her hands in frustration and continued walking toward their objective.

Jaune had the look of a condemned man walking to the gallows. While he was interested in what his new abilities could do, he wasn't looking forward to testing them on the fly against deadly monsters, yet again. "You can do this, Jaune. It's only Grimm, what's the worst that could happen?" He honestly didn't want to think about the worst, and mentally kicked himself for raising the specter.

"Getting your head into the game, Jaune?" Jaune was startled a bit at the sound of Pyrrha's voice.

"Something like that, yeah."

Pyrrha nodded and smiled. "I'd do that myself, before a match. Just remember to calm down, take a deep breath, and trust in your training and skills."

"Yeah...training and skills" Jaune tried to think about that even less.
"Not to mention, you have us as well, Jaune." Ren gave him a brief pat on the shoulder, while Nora gave him a bright smile and a skip in her step. Jaune honestly couldn't think of a better group to be with.

"Thanks, I just hope I don't let you all down."

"I'm sure you won't" Pyrrha said, with a sincere smile. "You're our leader, after all."

Jaune scratched his head and feigned a smile.

Further introspective was abandoned as the teams reached the designated meeting area, Forrest Elevator Six, an armored elevator that would lead them down into the entrance gate to the forest grounds they would be using today. Professor Goodwitch was waiting for them, new crop on her hip, and a tablet scroll in her hands. Several small packs lay on a cart next to her, which would be needed for today's events. Glynda recognized the group with a nod once everyone was in place.

"Good afternoon Professor!" Ruby gave Glynda an excitable wave.

"Good afternoon, Professor Goodwitch" Jaune greeted her with about as much enthusiasm as he could muster, which was not much.

"Good afternoon Team RWBY, Team JNPR, If you would, please collect the packs and follow me into the elevator, and we'll start your briefing". The teams did as expected, and walked into the large freight style elevator, and as its armored doors closed behind them they began their decent.

"Now" Glynda began, "As you all know, as a cover for our practices, your teams are among those selected for the Survey Operations and Reconnaissance program, in which teams are given simple assignments in remote training areas, where in they aid the school by performing basic reconnaissance of the areas in question, as well as the replacement and maintenance of the various sensors and camera in those areas, which are used to monitor and track Grimm movements. Given that your teams are freshmen students, a member of the faculty, myself in this case, has been assigned to aid you."

"In a way it kills two grimm with one shot: simulates actual huntsmen missions, and lets us explore our abilities. Quite clever of the Headmaster"

"Indeed, Ms Schnee. Per the mission outlines submitted by your respective team leaders, we will perform today's activities in two phases: the first will be the replacement of several sensors in each teams assigned zones. Once that is completed, we will regroup at the grid coordinates that have been sent to your scrolls, at which time you can do free form training in your professions. Any questions?"

"Are there any other teams in the area? I mean, any chance of unintended observation?"

"No Ms. Belladonna, there are currently no teams assigned to any training grounds adjacent to where we will be operating today. Feel free to use any skills you may."

"Will you be accompanying us during the replacements?"

"No Ms. Valkyrie, I'll proceed to the phase two coordinates to run though some of my own training. It's been a while since I was last out in the filed, and I need to practice my own profession. So far I've been limited to what I can train at Beacon, and what I've been told of the professions
basics from Ms Schnee, as we seem to share a base profession. I'm as looking forward to taking this for a spin as you all are.” Glynda didn't mention the accidental flooding of one of the training rooms due to a rogue water skill, though the incident had been 'refreshing'.

"Sounds good. Us, some replacement parts, and a forest of deadly Grimm. What's not to love?" Jaune hopped all would go as easily as he hopped, or at least, they would be able to handle any trouble that popped up.

"Remember guildies, our UI's will classify Grimm based on their relative power. In order from weakest to strongest it goes unlabeled, Veteran, elite and champion. Unlabeled are normal grimm, you should be able to take those. Veterans are stronger, but still solo-able if you are careful and confident. Elites are tough, be sure to have backup for those, and Champions are really strong, like what we faced at initiation. Call in your full team if you run across one."

"Is there anything higher than champion, Ms. Rose?"

"Not that we've seen." Glynda nodded, filing away that point mentally.

The elevator reached the cliff bottom and signaled. "Is everyone ready? Once the doors open, the mission will officially begin." said Glynda. Everyone nodded, readying their weapons and preparing to file out.

"Alright Roses, let's do this! Team RWBY our targets are in sector 6A, to the north. Yang take point, I'll take the rear." Ruby gripped Crescent Rose as she spoke, ready to get into action.

"And ours are in sector 6B, to the south. Pyrrha, take point, Ren to the rear." They nodded at Jaune and reorganized into the appropriate formation.

Glynda checked the external sensor readouts on her tablet, before nodding to herself and storing it on her hip, and brandishing her own weapon. "There are no grimm in the immediate area, but stay vigilant. Maintain communications, either via your scroll or the 'guild chat'. Commence operations!" Glynda pressed a button on the door panel, and the doors opened, the students eyes adjusting to the bright exterior sunlight.

Yang and Pyrrha quickly stepped outside and looked around, before signaling to their respective teams. With smiles and waves the two teams set off toward their objectives. Glynda smiled as they went, and rolled her shoulders, preparing herself for the days event. Despite her collected exterior, Glynda was positively brimming with excitement, it had been a long time since she'd felt this feeling of unknown, and the allure of learning something entirely new, It reminded her of her first trip into the forest back when she was a student. With a bit of pep in her step, Glynda set off herself, ready to see where the day took her.
The Noble Roses: Chapter 7

The Emerald Forest lay in the shadow of Vale and Beacon, a deceptive place, beautiful landscapes and awe inspiring vistas were the jewel of the kingdom. But such beauty was deceptive, for the forest was infested with grimm of all types, ever hungry and threatening the kingdom and its people. It was here where many a huntsman learned their trade, and others met their fates. The winds which blew through these woods carried on it the sounds of gunfire and the shrieks of the creatures of grimm, the signs of huntsmen and huntresses at work.

Glynda Goodwitch, combat professor at Beacon, had walked though these woods countless times, but today felt different, it felt new. The way her aura flowed, the smell of the dust in the air, the sounds of the wind and the branches crushed underfoot, it was like walking through the woods for the first time again. The air crackled with the smell of ozone as Glynda struck an unfortunate beowolf with a bolt of blue lightning, the grimm convulsing and stunned by the attack. Mentally she switched attunements, aligning herself with the elemental force of earth, before finishing off the grimm with several shards of razor sharp rock which erupted from the end of her crop. Smiling in victory, she casually strolled over to the fallen grimm, gathering the loot as the students called it.

The way her new abilities functioned was counter to everything Glynda had learned, being as they were fueled by magic rather than dust and semblance. Her mind reeled with possibilities, and she was eager to theorize how exactly it worked and how to blend them with her semblance and traditional huntress attacks.

The strangeness and utility reminded her of what the maidens must though as they learned to control their own powers, her respect for them growing with every cast. Her introspective was interrupted by the soft buzzing of her scroll, alerting her to the time. Nodding to herself, she prepared a message for sending in her UI.

[Glynda: It's time for your regularly scheduled check in. What are your team statuses?]

[Ruby: Enemy contact en-route to sensor two. Currently engaged.]

[Glynda: Do you require assistance?]

A few seconds go by without answer, causing a small amount of alarm in Glynda's mind.

[Ruby: We can handle it, no worries.]

Glynda nodded, trusting that RWBY wouldn't bite off more than they could chew.

[Glynda: Good to hear. How about you JNPR?]

[Jaune: Jaune here! Well, I guess you can see that anyways, right?]

[Glynda: ...Your report, Mr. Arc?]

[Jaune: Oh yeah, no trouble thus far, finishing up with sensor one now. Will be underway soon.]
Glynda smiled, and resumed her own mission. Confident her students and guild mates had the situation under control, she continued on toward the rendezvous coordinates for phase two of the days activities.

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Team JNPR was gathered around a large tree in a small forest clearing. Ren and Pyrrha were at the ready, guarding the tree and on the lookout for grimm, their gazes focused outward. Jaune was standing back to the tree, supporting Nora, who was standing on his shoulders and working on replacing a sensors powercell.

"Why am I the ladder again? I mean, wouldn't it be more appropriate for you to do this Pyrrha, giving Nora's in a skirt and all?"

"Aw, worried about my modesty, Jaune?" Jaune swore Nora was smiling, though he dared not look up to confirm. "Don't worry, I trust you."

"Besides the point, but thanks."

"We went over this Jaune" Pyrrha spoke, facing away from him, still on the lookout for any grimm interruptions. "My shoulders are uncovered and Nora is wearing boots. It was either you or Ren, and you are the taller of the two options."

Jaune sighed, but held steady. Nora wasn't heavy, in fact she was surprising light for someone with so much physical strength. It was rather interesting to him that the smallest women he knew welded the biggest weapons, truly size didn't equate to strength in the world of huntresses and huntsmen.

So far the mission had been pretty easy, though Jaune could hear the distant sounds of combat. Sound carried far in the forest however, so he had no idea if the sounds where from team RWBY, Professor Goodwitch, or another sector and team altogether. The thought made him uneasy: danger surrounded him and his team, and he had no idea just where it was. He trusted Ren and Pyrrha's skills as lookouts though, and had faith they wouldn't allow the team to be ambushed.

"And done!" Nora reactivated the sensor and checked it's status on her scroll, all reporting green. "Help me down Jaune" Jaune reached up and took Nora's hand, and she hopped off his shoulders Nora noted with a smile as she fell that Jaune had closed his eyes to prevent any accidental peeping. "Ever the gentleman, Jaune" Nora said with a wink.

Jaune blushed and heard some giggles from Pyrrha, and noted an approving nod from Ren. Brushing the dirt off his shoulders, Jaune checked his map for their next target. "Looks like the next one is 500 meters that way" he said with a point of his finger.

"Sounds good, same formation as before?" Jaune nodded at Ren's question, and everyone got back into position and set off toward the next objective.

"Well, so far so good, let's hope the others go that smoothly."
"That's true Jaune, but if we don't encounter the enemy we won't be able to build up our skills, in ether or profession or as huntsmen." Pyrrha was vigilant as she spoke, scanning for anything in their path.

Nora threw up a fist, "Yeah! And I won't be able to show off my new toys, and get some loot!"

"You shouldn't think in terms of physical rewards, Nora" Ren said from the rear "what we do we do because it is needed, and not for material reasons"

"Well yeah, but they certainly sweeten the deal, don't they?" Ren had to agree with that. "Not to mention, we need to take all this new gear for a spin. What's the point of getting all this otherwise? I mean, I've only got a few new things, I can't imagine what Pyrrha must feel like."

Pyrrha blushed at the attention, though the others couldn't see it with her in the lead. "It's incredible really. I feel stronger, faster, my senses keener. It's like having my aura unlocked all over again, there really is no other way to describe it." Sure, Pyrrha had practiced a bit with it on, but being out in the field felt even better. She couldn't wait to try it out in a proper fight.

"I'm so jealous! But just you wait, I've got my own toys to show off, you'll be like 'that's so cool, Nora' and 'here, have some extra pancakes in recognition of your awesomeness, Nora'".

Ren laughed, 'I'm sure we'll all be awe inspired."

"You were pretty excited to get back into the forest, any particular reason, well besides the obvious?"

"It's funny you mention that Pyrrha. Ever since we arrived I've felt a pull of sorts. I'm not sure where, seems to be distant, but it's definitely there."

Jaune scratched his chin, "We'll have to bring that up to the professor later, maybe there is something out here that the powers that be or whatever you want to find. Could be profession related". Ren made a mental note to do that as soon as possible.

The next few minutes passed by relatively calmly, the team engaged in quiet chit chat. Conversation halted when Pyrrha raised a hand signaling stop. "Hold up, I see something ahead in the next clearing."

The others came forward, taking cover in the bushes and they scoped out the scene. Pyrrha confirmed her observations, "Grimm, looks like a trio of Borbatusks, all normal ranked."

"Larger than what we saw in class as well. Options?" Jaune swallowed nervously, already knowing what they would say.

"We can't go around them, it would leave them at our rear, an unnecessary risk."

"I agree with Ren, we'll have to smash em." Nora had a grin on her face at the thought.

"So what's the plan, Jaune?"

Jaune thought for a second. "Hey Nora, you have some new grenades right? Want to test them out?"
"Gladly! Just say where."

"Alright then", Jaune thought back to the tactics texts they had studied in class, as well as his own personal readings. "We go for divide and conquer here. I'll trigger a echo of truth from my mantras to debilitate them, and Nora will fire something big into the middle of the pack. Hopefully, that will stun and disorient them a bit, letting us separate them and prevent us from getting swarmed."

"Sounds fun, I'll take the far one." Nora fingered Magnhild's selector switch, choosing something appropriate.

"You sure Nora? Pyrrha is the faster runner."

"No worries leader, I got it covered." Nora tapped her boots, before lowering her goggles into position.

Pyrrha adjusted her weapons and got into position. "In that case, I'll take the one on the right."

"Cool, Ren and myself will take the one closest then. Everyone ready?" Everyone nodded their affirmations. Jaune took a deep breath, trying to settle his nerves. This was less scary than the deathstalker had been, and they were the ones with the advantage of surprise this time. But there was a feeling he couldn't shake, like he was missing something. He forced it down, and prepared himself for the assault, readying his sword and deploying his shield.

Jaune broke cover first, letting off his echo of truth skill in a blinding flash of light and a faint echo of words on the air. Robbed of their sight and their sure footing, the grimm were taken off guard as grenades sailed into the middle of their pack, exploding with fire and shrapnel. Jaune whistled at the sight, Nora's new grenades were far more destructive than her old ones.

Pyrrha broke cover with a dash toward her target, showing all the grace of a champion sprinter. She swiped at its legs with a slash, aiming to take its feet out from under the boarbatusk and expose its un-armored belly. Her aim was keen, and she scored an impressive skill enhanced slash that nearly took off it's rear leg. She wasted no time capitalizing, shifting to a shield bash to further throw it off balance.

Any question Jaune had as to how Nora planed to cover the distance to her target was answered a second later, as Nora's boots kicked out a burst of fire dust powered rocket exhaust, sending her flying toward the grimm in an arc, hammer at the ready. Nora swang at its tusks with a mighty blow as she landed, using the mechanical action as a lever to flip it hooves over head.

Ren moved to flank Jaune and his target with a burst of green gunfire while Jaune tried to replicate Pyrrha's tactic with a clumsy aimed strike of his own. It was less effective than he'd hoped, but between him and Ren, the still recovering grimm didn't know where to lash out.

Everything appeared to be going well in his mind, but he couldn't shake his ill feeling. Glancing up to check his teams progress as Ren took the attention of the grimm with a green trail emitting double slash of his weapons, Jaune at last discovered the source of the ill omen. A fourth Boarbatusk, a veteran at that, had emerged from the undergrowth. Previously hidden from their line of sight, it immediately moved to flank Nora with a charge, one she couldn't see being so preoccupied with her own target.

Jaune shouted out a warning, his feet moving as fast they could to try to intercept the new target. Ren noticed as well, firing a new burst at his own target, hoping to keep it from pursuing Jaune.
"Crap, not going to make it…" There was just too much distance between them, and not enough time to cover it. The solution came in a flash of blue light, and Jaune disappeared from his current position, and covered the rest of the distance to the target in less than a heartbeat, teleporting next to the grimm with his arrival leaving a large circular symbol on the ground below him that weakened the veteran grimm, robbed it of its sight, and give Jaune a brief rush of power. Without a second's hesitation, Jaune thrust forward his sword, driving the blade deep between a small gap of the grimm's armored side.

"Did I just…' Jaune had no time to dwell on this new skill, as he quickly realized the blow hadn't been a killing one, though it had taken a chunk off the grimm's HP. Blinded and in agony, the grimm charged in a random direction, and Jaune found himself taken along for the ride.

Hearing the panicked shout of her team leader Nora spun around and struck the head of her hammer on the ground, it's capacitors discharging to produce a lightning field on the forest floor in a wide circle. It was too late to stop the veteran grimm's exodus, though it did prevent her own from joining in the retreat.

[Pyrrha: Jaune! I'm finished with mine, hang on, i'm on the way!]

"Oh I'm hanging all right!" Jaune shouted to no one, hanging onto his blade for dear life as the charging grimm crashed through bushes and rotten logs in its rapid retreat from the clearing. He wasn't sure how much time had passed before he managed to dig in his heels and wrench the blade free, himself tumbling away as the grimm faltered and crashed into a tree.

Jaune shook the cobwebs from his head and stood up, just as the grimm itself was recovering. It's head swung left and right as it searched for the source of its ills, which it found far quicker than Jaune would have liked. "Alone, drug through the mud, and facing a now thoroughly pissed off grimm. Today's going great, go me..Oh crap!"

Jaune threw himself sideways at the last second, barely dodging a charge which caught the edge of his shield and spun Jaune around like a top. He racked his brain for an idea, and deciding that fortune favored the bold in this case, and placing his hope in his new weapon and his profession.

As the grimm moved to charge again, Jaune fired off another charge of his mantra, hitting the grimm with an Echo of Truth spell in a flash that drove it off course and sent it smacking into another tree, further depleting its HP. Jaune returned his sword to its sheath, and with a flick of the activation switch, watched as the weapon and sheath shifted into broad sword mode. Jaune gripped the now heavy blade with two hands, testing its weight.

"Here goes nothing!" Jaune braced himself and readied the blade as the grimm charged again. This time, being the third charge of his mantra, it was not an Echo of Truth that was unleashed, but the stronger Voice of Truth. In addition to the normal debilitation effects, this variant added a new one: immobilization, and that was where Jaune pinned his hopes, after all, it had done wonders against the practice bots back at Beacon.

Pyrrha arrived on the scene just as the spell activated, The echo of harsh truths fresh on the air, though no one outside a grimm could have made sense of the words. As it struck, the grimm's body locked up mid stride, the imbalance causing it to trip up and fall into a slide, side down and belly exposed. It was just what Jaune was counting on, and he couldn't suppress his smile. Lady Luck was finally on his side.
Using the borbatusks momentum against it, Jaune dropped low, bracing himself in a kneel and swinging with all his might. As his weapon tore into the grimm it was followed a scant second later by a phantasmic blade that followed the arc of his swing in a trail of blue fire. Ripped head to tail, the grimm crashed lifelessly into another tree, it's carcass splitting open. At last, the danger was extinguished.

Pyrrha looked upon the scene with a smile. "Seems like you didn't need my help after all, Jaune. Well done" She relaxed her form, still mindful to keep her weapons at hand, just in case the fight attract other unwanted company. Her heart nearly stopped when Jaune dropped to the ground and flopped out on his back.

"Jaune!" She rushed to his side, checking his status with her UI. His aura appeared to be good despite the rough trip. "Are you okay?"

"It's...it's dead?"

"Yes, very much so Jaune."

"And...I killed it?"

Pyrrha smiled, "Unless we had unexpected company or my eyes deceived me, yes you did."

Jaune smiled and said the only thing that came to mind over his racing heart.. "Freaking awesome!"

"Awesome indeed."

He sat up and Pyrrha helped him brush off the dirt. To her shock, Jaune wrapped his arms around her and proceeded to swing her around.

"Jaune!"

"I freaking killed a grimm! Woohoo!" His eyes met hers, and their brushes grew as they realized what they were doing. With a muffled cough he set her down. "Sorry about that, bit of an emotional moment."

"It's okay, happens to the best of us. Your first solo kill right?" Jaune nodded at her question.

After taking a few seconds to collect himself, together they walked over the grimm's split corpse and collected their loot, some miscellaneous materials and to his delight, a small wooden chest.

"Oh cool, a chest!" Jaune said, pointing to the aforementioned box.

"Interesting, I don't see anything." Pyrrha turned to face him, "Maybe it's just for you?"

Jaune shrugged and reached down to touch it. "Lets see, ah, looks like it gave me a pair of boots. Nifty." He showed her the pair of armored combat boots. I'll try them on later, let's get back to the others."

[Ren: We've eliminated the grimm, do you need assistance?]

[Jaune: we're good, target down, heading back your way, after all, I need to loot your targets as well.]
Nora: wait, then how do we loot your's?

Jaune and Pyrrha shared a look, then turned as one to the dead grimm behind them.

"You know Pyrrha, that's a very good question."

"Maybe we can stuff it in our packs?"

Jaune thought for a second. "We may have a bit of a problem here."

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"I think we may have a bit of a problem here!" Weiss and Ruby were crouched behind a tree, taking cover. The sounds of battle were all around them, an Elite King Taijitu was rampaging in the clearing, Blake and Yang were moving to cover themselves, providing covering fire where they could.

"Nah, we got this, it's cool."

"Cool?! This is as far from cool as can be! It is the anti-cool!"

Ruby waved Weiss concern off. "We've been through worse than this."

"That doesn't make this any more comforting" Weiss's eyes went wide, "Move!"

Ruby and Weiss dashed to the side just as the tree they were behind exploded into splinters as the grimm's white snake head tore though it like tissue.

"You two okay?" Yang shouted between barrages, her frown growing as she watched her rounds impact with minimal effect.

"We're fine, just peachy really." Weiss fired off some ice attacks with her glyphs, which proved to be no more effective than Yang's shots. "This isn't working, it's hide is too tough. Melee maybe?"

"It's not much better, even with our skills." Blake dodged a lunge form the black head, swinging her weapon in blade form. It cut into the grimm's flesh, but not deep enough to do serious damage.

Yang attempted to flank it, but was noticed by the white head which lashed out at her, mouth open and all its fangs on display. She fired forwards, sending a barrage down it's gullet and evading the strike backwards. The grimm recoiled at the assault, but it's HP gauge was only marginally affected. "Damn, it's literally got eyes in the back of it's head, can't seem to pull off a flanking maneuver."

"So let's do something about that." Ruby said, using her semblance to dash for cover.

"Got a plan Ruby?" Weiss propelled herself backward in a spinning leap that would make a figure skater proud, evading the grimm's attack. 'Threading the needle with that one' she thought.
"I've got an idea, but I'll need everyone's help with it. Once my attack lands, try to divide it's attention and expose it's midsection."

"I think I know where this is going, think you can pull it off sis?"

"Count on it. Go!" Ruby shifted into a one handed grip of her scythe, the other burning with green fire, her fingers moving in an intricate pattern as she summoned a pool of dark energy which radiated out like a spiders web from a glowing triangular rune beneath the grimm. From that pool poured the sounds of gasping, women choking and dying, and unsettling muffled voices. Dark clouds appeared in the grimms two sets of eyes, and it lashed out blindly, it's sight temporarily lost.

Weiss and Blake capitalized on this. Blake swung at the white head and was amazed to see a clone leap at it, attacking with it's own copy of Gambol Shroud. Her shock only lasted a brief second before the grimm lashed out at her clone, destroying it with the effect of a shattering mirror. The grimm searched around confusedly for its prey, before noticing Blake, who had used the momentary confusion to fire off several rounds at its eyes. The white head gave pursuit, eager to tear Blake to pieces.

Weiss attacked the black head for her part, shifting to a combination of water and air, and hurling a spinning blade of ice at the black head, catching it just below the eye. The head caked in frost and turned toward her, moving with far more speed than anything that size had a right to.

Blake and Weiss moved away from each other, causing the grimm to stretch out. Blake abandoned ranged attacked to play a game of cat and mouse, luring the white head away and confusing it with multiple shadow clones, and to her delight, new illusion clones that were not passive like her shadow clones, but actively attacked. The grimm seemed to have no way of distinguishing which one was the real Blake, something she used to her great advantage.

Weiss was using every trick in her arsenal to stay just out of it's range as the black head struck at her again and again. As she fought she wove together elements on the fly, hitting it with everything she could summon up. Weiss burned it with a vortexes of flame from combing air and fire. She blinded it with a crossing arcs of water jets and flames by weaving together fire and water, and left it bloodied and infuriated with shards of ice and stone born from water and earth. Weiss eyes grew with every new combination, eager to see what popped out next.

The King Taijitu's focus split between her teammates, the moment Ruby had been hoping for at last arrived as it's checkerboard colored midsection revealed itself. Yang launched forward with a sundering leap and a upward wild blow to the grimms midsection that popped it into the air like an arch. Ruby wasted not a second, shifting her weapon into war scythe mode before rocketing forward in a blast of rose petals.

"Nothing can save you!" she screamed, her shout causing her weapon to glow an eerie green, before swinging at the exposed midsection, carving though the grimms hide and slicing the creature in two. Suddenly disconnected, the two heads screeched in pain as their mental and physical connections broke.

"Great, now we have two separate grimm, this helps us?" Weiss took a second to recover as the black head flailed around in agony.

"It's effectively half blind now, we robbed it of its ability to watch it's own back." Blake shouted back, as she continued her clone shell game with with grimm.
"Yeah!" Ruby said, spinning around and firing off a few shots. "Divide and conquer, as our professors would say. To our partners, Sis!"

"Right!" Yang and Ruby exchanged a smile before heading off to assist their respective partners.

Now a set of two on one fights, things started to turn in team RWBY's favor. When one partner would attack head on, another was attacking their respective heads flank or rear. The combination of attack and misdirection was at last causing the grimm's HP bar to fall at a respectable rate.

"We need a clear shot at it's eyes if we want to take it down" Blake said, dodging with another clone and using her ribbon to direct the the black head into a setup for a vicious uppercut from Yang.

"Bastard won't stop moving though." Yang said, dodging the heads follow up attack by a hair's breadth, her adrenaline pumping.

A light bulb in Blakes head lit up as an idea came to her. Noting Ruby and Weiss were now well out of easy earshot, she quickly wrote up a message for party chat.

[Blake: Yang, Ruby, play some chicken.]

To their credit, understanding flashed on the sisters faces almost instantly.

"Great Idea! Weiss, let me take it's attention then run parallel to me, separated a bit. Strike its eyes as soon as the opportunity shows, you'll know when'

"Sounds good to me."

Blake and Yang had a similar conversation on their end of the clearing. Ruby and Yang attacked their respective head, drawing their focus before turning and running with all their speed right at each other. Dodging attacks as the grimm halves were in hot pursuit, and keeping it's attention with rear facing attacks, the grimm failed to notice Blake and Weiss peeling off.

A scarce moment before Yang and Ruby would have run into each other, each of the two sisters let off an attack with practiced ease, Ruby summoned forth another pulsing field of darkness, radiating out from a strange orange rune and a fractal like pattern of effect that greatly empowered everyone within range, in this case team RWBY. Yang gave into her berserk nature, letting lose a primal energy fueled rupturing smash to the ground that exploded the shadow field left by Ruby's attack, the effects blinding the two grimm heads. Their sight robbed from them, they had no way to alter their course as Ruby and Yang dodged, leaving the grimms head to smash into each other face first, their open mouths and fangs locking them together.

Blake and Weiss took it as their que, and charged in from either side, blades first. Weiss zipped forward on a glyph before taking on a frightful appearance as lava born from a combination of fire and earth cloaked her form in a fiery barrier that burned the stunned black head as she drove her blade deep into it's eye and brain.

Blake for her part summoned a phantasmal clone at the white head's face that slashed at the helpless grimm before Blake traded places with the clone with a snap of her fingers and plunged her own blade though a shattered reality and into the grimms defenseless eye.
The elite King Taijitu's HP gauge hit zero as life left the two halves, connected now by their interlocked mouths. Their hearts hammering in their chests, team RWBY howled in victory.

"That was awesome, go team!" Ruby moved to do her happy dance with Weiss, but stopped as Weiss was still covered in fire. Blake had no such defense, and gave Yang a well earned high five before joining her in a dance.

"So ah Weiss, can you turned that off? I'd kind of like to celebrate here"

"What? Oh, right, sorry'. Weiss ended the attack a second later with a thought, giving Ruby a high five but to Ruby's frustration refused to dance with her, leaving Ruby to sort of dance awkwardly alone, a pout on her face.

"Lighten up Weisscream, we won!" Yang and Blake hopped over the dead grim, joining Ruby and Weiss on their side.

"True, but.."

"Oh but nothing Weiss, any fight you walk away from and the grimm doesn't is a win in my book. Just leave it at that, get your loot, and get on with the show".

Weiss abandoned further argument and along with the others went to loot the grimm. "Hmm, Kind of expected some bigger reward given it's an elite an all." The grimm had yielded the same general grimm parts and money as lesser grimm, just in a slightly greater amount..

"Yeah it's a bit of a bummer Weiss, but only champions guarantee major loot. Everything else is a roll of the dice." Ruby pocketed her own loot easily, and stowed her weapon.

"Nice moves out there though you two, looks like you have a few new tricks up your sleeves."

"You can say that again, my mind is still reeling now that things are cooling down." Blake's mind was filled with possibilities. Clones that attacked and were not just passive opened up a multitude of strategies.

Weiss brushed the dirt off her dress, "I'm in agreement with Blake here, the fight was...enlightening." Weiss's eyes raised as she noticed all the new attack skills on her UI, as well as a new utility skill.

Blake turned to Ruby, question on her lips. "Though I have to ask, what were those spells you used?" Blakes curiosity was screaming for an answer.

"Oh those? My UI calls them wells. They are a type of skill that targets an area, rather than a creature directly. Why you ask?"

"I don't know, they just feel familiar or something. I'll think on it some more."

"Alright then, let's take a breather then onward to the next objective! Take some time to mentally review, and such." Ruby was pumped, as was Yang. Back in the field and killing grimm, what more could a girl ask for?
"About time you folks show up, we were starting to get bored." Yang waved to team JNPR, who had just walked into the meadow where team RWBY had stopped to take a break after completing their last objective.

"Grimm like to wreck schedules, not much we can do about that." Jaune returned the wave, the rest of team JNPR expressing their greetings as well. Jaune looked ragged, having literally been drug through the dirt and wheezing a bit. The rest of the team looked to be in high spirits, with only a few smudges and grass stains to indicate the days efforts. Team RWBY was none the worse for wear, stained clothing and a torn up cloak on Ruby to the contrary. Teams reunited, they set off to meet up with professor Goodwitch, and the individualized training to follow.

"Everyone okay?" Ruby said, looking over team JNPR.

Nora flexed an arm, "Eh, it was nothing we couldn't handle. Mostly small fries."

"We did run into a few veterans as well, Jaune got a solo kill on one. Overall, we did quite excellently." Pyrrha smiled to her team, who smiled back, Jaune with a bit of a blush.

Jaune scratched the back of his head. "It was nothing, luck really." He didn't feel the need to disclose it was also mind blindingly terrifying.

"Don't sell yourself short Jaune, it's a great achievement. Grimm aren't easy, vets less so."

"Thanks Ruby. How were things on the team RWBY side?"

"Mostly common grimm, though we did run into an elite King Taijitu. It was nothing Team RWBY couldn't handle, our performance was exemplary."

Blake smirked "I see someone owns a thesaurus, eh Weiss?" Weiss humphed, and turned to talk with Pyrrha.

"I must say Pyrrha, black looks quite good on you."

"Thank you! I thought I'd go all out today, and see how it feels. Not sure I'd wear this in class though, it's a bit...I dunno."

"Head Turning?" Pyrrha blushed more at that description. Granted, her outfit had nothing on Blake's, which was plain jaw dropping. Pyrrha thought a deflection was called for.

"I think that better defines your own outfits."

"You have our esteemed team leader to thank for these." Blake said, giving in to the urge to pose just a bit. Showy as it was, her new outfit made her look damn good.

"Despite her normally conservative dress, Ruby knows how to make an outfit stand out. She didn't make mine however, It's a Xiao Long original" Yang was ever eager to boast about her own skills in the crafting department, and despite their attempts to hide it, the boys of the guild had taken notice.
"That reminds me, how are we doing on our outfits Ren?"

"I'm still working on them Nora, it's a bit of a learning experience." Ren turned to face Ruby and Yang, "I've no prior experience leatherworking, let alone designing entirely new outfits. Our current outfits were commissioned from a tailoring shop."

"No worries Ren, you'll get it in time. Once you get that first one done, you find yourself wanting to make more and more." Tailoring was a dark, if fashionable hole to fall into. Ruby loved it, though her wallet loved it less. Granted, grimm hunting was a very profitable business, more so for guild members, so the hit to her wallet had been manageable.

"Not to mention, turns out many shops in town give discounts for Remnant Hunters Guild members. Dust shops, clothing shops, weapons shops, you name it. Makes it easy to get materials."

"We've noticed, We've made use of it in our last few trips into Vale on team get togethers." Jaune found that he greatly enjoyed their team outings, though a part of him felt terrible for hiding his own dirty secret.

Ruby sighed, "Still working on setting one of those up on our side, everyone is always so busy." Ruby was eager to learn more about Blake and Weiss, but both always seemed to have an excuse not to hang out.

The two teams continued on to their final objective, engaging in idle conversation to pass the time, always on the lookout for unexpected trouble of the grimm variety.

Ruby checked her map and nodded to herself as the groups entered a large clearing. "Looks like this is the place, anyone see the professor?"

The answer came in the form of an Ursa Major crashing through a tree and landing back side down in the clearing. The teams instantly went for their weapons, but before anyone could ready an attack, a large flaming fang of manga appeared over the laid out grimm, and dropped with considerable force directly into its chest. Only a charred corpse remained as the fires died down. Glynda followed shortly after, walking into the clearing with practiced grace, and a smile at the ruin she had wrought. Despite any combat she may have encountered, her outfit looked flawless.

Ruby had stars in her eyes. "She's soo cool!" Her fellow huntresses nodded in agreement.

"Welcome students. I trust no one had major issues with the first part of today's assignment?"

Yang eyed the burned out Ursa and whistled, "Unlike that guy, our day has been pretty good thus far."

"Team RWBY performed with professionalism and skill, professor" Weiss had a look of pride on her face.

"You're just hoping she teaches you to do that." Blake pointed to the grimm. Weiss didn't deny it.

"All objectives completed." Ruby was all smiles.

"Same with team JNPR. We ran into a few snags here or there, a few ran into us, but we completed our objectives." Jaune was fairly confident it was due mostly to luck on his part, but he'd so far
survived.

Nora pumped a fist in the air, "We ripped a few grimm a new one!"

"Good to hear on all accounts." Everyone smiled at the professors words. "But do be sure not to lean too much on your new skills, it would not be wise to forget your own core strengths and abilities and become too dependent on your new enhancements. You'll not always be able to make use of them, especially with the Vytal Festival coming up in a few months."

"Fear not professor, we've all still got it where it counts! Plus we practice all the time at Beacon without our professions, we're equal opportunity butt kickers." Yang's words got smiles all around.

"Excellent to hear. The previous activity has been a taste of what you can expect going forward as you work through the curriculum here at Beacon, though missions will increase in complexity and danger as you advance. Now, I do believe this next portion of today's training will be lead by Ms. Rose. If you are ready?"

"Sure am! The primary purpose of this part of training is similar to what we do in class, or in individual training at Beacon, except you will be making use of your profession's skills. Basically, take them for a spin and get more familiar with their ins and outs. Currently, you've only used them in active combat, or in individual rooms as designated by Professor Goodwitch and the headmaster. Here we can be a bit more free in how or where we use them. In addition, some of you share similar skills, base classes, or otherwise want to exchange information. Here we can do that with a much greater freedom than at school."

"Sounds reasonable enough, so how are we going to proceed, Ruby?"

"Good question Weiss! I plan to have us divide out into pairs or groups based off which skill or such you want to focus on today. For example, Weiss, Yang and Ren all have stance style skills, so they could peel off and work on those. Blake and Jaune have their mantras in common, and have been exchanging some thoughts on it, though it may be easier here since you can be more open about it. Pyrrha and Nora don't seem to share anything in common yet, but maybe the professor and I can work on your more general skills or combat abilities. Or just answer questions as needed."

"Sounds good to me, any objections?" Jaune polled the guild, and no one seemed to object to the plan of action. They started to move off into their various groups, when Ruby stopped them.

"Before we split up I have a question." Ruby turned to Glynda and continued. "Professor, I noticed you fighting when we arrived, are there any small groups of grimm around here? I'd like to demonstrate something and need their...assistance."

"Hmm, let me check." Glynda pulled out her tablet scroll and checked the sensor data for nearby grimm activity. "Looks like there is a group of mixed grimm in a clearing about 200 meters to our east. They are within the designated area we are to train in as well, will that work for your demonstration, Ms Rose?"

"That will work nicely, thank you professor. Alright guildmates, group up and move out, but don't engage once we arrive. I've got something I want to show you all once we arrive."

"And what would that be?"
Ruby paused for a second "Well Pyrrha, I want to show you what you can all look forward to: What our professions can do once you really go all out." Ruby continued walking eastward, toward the expected group of grimm.

There were looks of excited confusion on many of the guilds faces, save for one. Yang's smile looked radiant and she was positively giddy.

"Oh this is going to be awesome!" Yang hopped up and down, imagining it. "So, So awesome". Yang's enthusiasm was infectious, and the guild fell in and followed behind Ruby, curious as to what the display would entail.

Quietly as they could, the guild gathered in the undergrowth just outside the clearing professor Goodwitch had indicated. Ruby was at point, looking over the assembled grimm who were mulling about not fifty yards away. The grimm looked to be a mostly beowolves, with a few griffon milling about or clinging to trees. Despite being of different species the grimm were ignoring each others presence, something the students found interesting. Grimm saw only grimm, not rivalries, factions, or related. More importantly, they hadn't yet noticed the group of huntsmen, though they most certainly would if left undisturbed. It was difficult to hide from creatures that sensed emotion, after all.

"Alright, we got ourselves a group of monsters that need killing, and some front row seats to the carnage. I don't see anything special, not even a veteran, it's all mundane grimm. What's your plan sis?"

Ruby considered her options, and decided on the best course of action. "Oh, you know, thought I'd go over there and put the fear of death into them. No biggie" Several guildmates were admittedly slack jawed at the simplistic nature of the plan.

"That's it?! That's your grand plan?"

"Trust me Weiss, that's a more solid plan than you'd think. Ruby's got it were it counts, as you're about to see."

"Alright, here goes! Be ready to back me up if needed Yang, everyone else, try not to scream."

"Plan on taking your babies out for a walk, eh sis?"

"You know it." Ruby said with a wink and a sisterly fist bump. Glynda looked a bit paler at the thought of seeing Ruby's minions again, while Jaune was smiling.

Ruby cracked her neck and readied her weapon. "Alright Ruby" she thought to herself, "Time to show em how it's done."

With a nod to professor Goodwitch, who was recording the event on her tablet scroll, Ruby got into position and vanished in a burst of rose petals.

The first beowolf didn't even see the attack coming, its first inkling of danger came when it's head was neatly separated from its neck, body crashing lifelessly to the ground, wisps of green flowing into Ruby as it fell. Alerted by the sounds of their fallen kin the others became aware of the huntress in their midst, sounding the alarm with a cascade of roars, the closest quickly moving to attack. The beowolves fell to all fours and charged, while the griffons took to the air.
Ruby was unafraid, her hands blazing with green fire and her eyes glowing a soft silver. She quickly summoned a well beneath the closest group of beowolves, its greenish rune radiating out and turning their strengths into weaknesses. Caught off guard by the attack, they had no defense as Ruby went on the offensive once more, lashing out with her scythe and cleaving one grim in half before taking another's legs off. She quickly finished the hobbled grim off with a chilling strike to its head. As a grim moved to flank her, Ruby sent out spectral scythes which erupted in giant form behind the grim and drug it to her waiting attack which made short work of the creature.

Ruby crossed the clearing with a shot enhanced leap and met another grim head on, bisected it with a shot enhanced slash to its midsection before shifting her weapon to rifle mode and taking a quick shot at one of the griffins. The round cast a green streak as it crossed the distance between Ruby and the grim, impacting the griffon's wing and leaving it a bloody mess. The griffon spiraled out of the sky, impacting the ground where Ruby met it with a well aimed nightfall vortex. Ruby was on it before the vortex had a chance to clear, finishing the griffon off with a shot to the head.

With each kill green wisps flowed into Ruby, and she smiled as she added their lifeforce to her reserves. Despite their kins deaths, the grim did not let up, with several more beowolves charging at her. The remaining griffin went for a ground strafing attack, but met only rose petals where it expected Ruby to be, she having used her semblance to evade it.

With semblance enhanced speed Ruby headed off another group of beowolves, activating her reaper's shroud en route. Her visage now of death itself, Ruby slid toward them in a blinding charge, putting two of the grim down with easy swipes of her now spectrally enlarged weapon, before stunning the last with an overhead strike which left behind a field of ice. Shifting out of her shroud, she dispatched the stunned grim with a heavy swing that took her feet off the ground. Her attack reacted with the ice field, and she caught several other grim approaching off guard with frozen bolts of ice, hurled by Ruby as she whirled around.

Ruby rushed toward the nearest of the now chilled beowolves with her semblance, cleaving it in twain before shooting at another, the shot catching it in the neck and decapitating it. The remaining griffin made its presence known with another attack run. Ruby dodged to the side, Hooking its wing with her scythe's blade, slicing it from the grimm's body and causing the griffon to crash into several of its slain kin whose bodies still lay in the field. Now on all fours and howling in agony, the grimm moved to repay Ruby for its injury.

Ruby smiled before shouting in a cold voice a single word "Rise!" From the corpses burst forth several horrors resembling large skinned rat like creatures. Caught off guard, the grim was helpless as the shambling horrors tore into it, its pained scratches filling the clearing and causing several of her guild mates to look away from the carnage. It was one thing to kill a grimm, another to see it eaten alive by things that clearly were not 'alive' as they understood the concept.

Ruby stared down the last group of beowolves, who spread out, perhaps reasoning that a combined attack may have better luck in taking her down. Ruby stood her ground, but made no motion to attack, inclined to wait. The stalemate lasted only seconds before the remaining grim, five in number, charged at Ruby from multiple directions.

A heartbeat before they were on her, Ruby again raised her voice to shout, "Chilled to the Bone!" As the words left her mouth, a dome of blue manifested and quickly expanded out in an explosion of cold that flash froze the charging grim mid stride. They crashed to the ground and tumbled at Ruby as she once again activated her reaper's shroud. Ruby shattered them with a spinning attack, sending shards of frozen grimm scattering. Ruby gave one last look around the clearing, and seeing
no further threat, dismissed the shroud in a cascade of black rose petals.

The threat passed and the display seemingly over, the guild emerged from their vantage points and walked into the clearing, taking in the sights before them, the air noticeably cooler from the use of Ruby's magic..

"Way to go Ruby!" Yang rushed over to envelop her sister in a hug. "Although, you could have left a few for me."

"They went down faster than expected, I didn't even have time to show off a few other things I had been planning. Next time I guess."

"What on Remnant are those things! Their horrifying!" Weiss shouted while pointing at the shambling horrors, who at last had finished their grisly task and were returning to Ruby's side. Weiss made sure to put as much distance between them and her as she could while still being within earshot of Ruby.

"Yeah, they are nightmare inducing, aren't they?" Ruby had a smile on her face as she looked upon them. Seeing the looks of disgust on her guildmates faces, she dismissed the minions with a wave. Safely banished back from which they came, the rest of the guild at last came fully to Ruby's side.

"I was kind of expecting Bubbles when you mentioned your babies, not...those things. Is that what you dog ate?"

Pyrrha looked at her partner with a raised eyebrow "Bubbles?"

"To answer your question Pyrrha, Bubbles is another of my minions. To answer Jaune's, yes."

"Please gods tell me they don't get more disgusting than those things."

Ruby stared at Weiss, but said nothing.

"They do...don't they?"

Ruby nodded. "Well, some of them, yeah."

Weiss's face was as pale as her hair.

"I'm going to go sit down and try to get the image out of my head, excuse me". Weiss sat down a short distance away and buried her head in her knees.

Blake watched as she left. "She must be bad with this sort of thing. Granted, outside of Ruby I'm not sure anyone would be okay with this sort of thing."

Yang shrugged, "You get used to them after a while."

Nora whistled as she took in the impressive amount of slain grimm. "So you can do more than that, right? Because that was certainly a thing. I mean, there was so much thing there. Strange, scary things, but things."

Several people turned to Ren for a translation. "I think what Nora is trying to say is it was impressive, and if that's indicative of what have to look forward to in our own professions, we've a
"lot of work ahead of us."

"Not to mention the possibilities it brings to bear." Pyrrha was replaying the fight in her mind, making note of the effects of various skills on the attacking grimm.

"It varies class by class, but yeah, your tool set is pretty vast, even for the less magic based professions. The first time uncle Qrow got into the field after getting his profession unlocked, he kept spamming us with laughter in guild chat."

"I shall have to ask him about that later." Glynda was looking forward to that conversation, both valuing a veterans huntsman’s input on the awakening of skills as well as an opportunity to tease him.

"At any rate, that was a splendid display of ability, Ms. Rose. Your attacks were clean and you made great use of your enhanced mobility. The rest of you would be wise to learn from it, and not just as a display of our profession's possibilities, but also as a display of the general skills expected of a huntress or huntsmen."

"Yes professor." came a chorus of replies. Ruby herself blushed at the attention, and decided to move things along.

"Alright guildmates, let's get the rest of this show on the road! Everyone loot up, then break into the previously mentioned groups for profession practice."

"Loot time! Let's go Ren, time's a wastin!"

As the guild went about the task of gathering drops from Ruby's well earned victory, everyone had a similar thought in their minds: If this is indicative of what Ruby can do, what was in store for themselves? And to the person, everyone was more eager than ever to find out.
The Noble Roses: Chapter 8

If one asked any student of Beacon what the most frightening thing one could face while attending the academy was, most would say "Being asked to participate in one of Professor Peach's demonstrations." Second on the list, and only slightly less terrifying was the situation Jaune Arc found himself in: being called to the headmasters office.

It was not his first time in the gear motif and rather spacious office, but this was the first time he had been called up by himself. Given the situation that precipitated the summons, Jaune was understandably nervous as he stood before the headmaster, as well as the ever present Professor Goodwitch. The rest of the guild had heard of the incident, and were eagerly awaiting news of his fate.

Jaune sat quietly before the headmaster's desk, Ozpin sat reviewing something on his display with Glynda standing by his side. After receiving an affirmative nod from Ozpin, Glynda broke the uneasy silence. "Mr. Arc, In your own words, please describe what happened this morning."

Jaune took a breath, swallowed down his fears, and began. "As I'm sure you've heard, someone outside of the guild witnessed the effects of my profession. I've been exposed."

It was Sunday, a day the students of Beacon largely spent doing leisure activities, free training and studying. The guilds recent forest mission and training had gone smoothly, and all members were approaching their training and studies with renewed vigor. New skills meant new lines of investigation or areas to focus on, and many of them were quite busy around campus in pursuit of their goals.

Pyrrha and Jaune were walking back from the library, each with a stack of books in their arms. Pyrrha was continuing to study famous or legendary figures, a topic she had previously found interesting, but every since her professions awakening, she'd found them irresistible. Jaune's area of focus was a bit more scattered, searching for both topics that may lead to the discovery of new mantras, as well as topics related to justice, resolve, survival, etc. Jaune had a feeling something about those would lead to the other two expected tomes for his profession, if what Ruby's dad had told him held true. He'd been openly looking at his Tome of Courage while researching the new topics. To a random student, the tome itself did not appear to be anything more than an old book, one of the hundreds of thousands Beacon's library had. Jaune was carrying it in the stack of books he was currently holding as he walked, not wanting to stow it in his far to large for it's external dimensions bag, nor desummon it in front of the other students.

As they walked, Pyrrha and Jaune conversed about more mundane academic subjects, and their plans for the evening. Their attention on each other, neither noticed team CRDL walking toward them, nor the cold look they we receiving from the team's leader, Cardin Winchester. Cardin adjusted his path, spying a chance for mischief and fun at Jaune's expense. Pyrrha noticed Cardin but was unable to give Jaune a warning before Cardin placed himself directly in Jaune's path, clearly intending to use a shoulder charge to bump into Jaune and knock the books from his arms.

The blow never arrived. Jaune and Pyrrha's eyes widened in shock, as did the eyes of team CRDL, as Cardin contacted and bounced off a phantasmal blue shield, the obvious sign of an aegis spell taking a blow. Not expecting to run into a literal wall, Cardin rebounded, falling flat on his butt,
ego and shoulder both bruised.

"What the hell was that, Arc?"

Pyrrha and Jaune shared a look before Jaune responded with the first plausible excuse to come to mind.

"Oh that's just my semblance at work, sorry about that."

Cardin got up, batting away an attempt to help from his partner. "Well freaking watch where you're walking next time, moron." Jaune held his tongue and didn't point out that Cardin had run into him, not the other way around. Cardin stormed off, giving Jaune a wide buffer, the rest of team CRDL following close behind.

Pyrrha and Jaune exchanged another look, before quickly resuming their journey, their pace clearly accelerated. Both of them knew it wouldn't take long before word of the incident got around. The guild had to know, and that meant professor Goodwitch as well.

Jaune was not looking forward to that conversation.

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Jaune sat in silence as Ozpin considered the story. "I have a few questions before I render any judgement, Mr Arc."

"I'll do my best to answer them."

"Good to hear that, Mr. Arc. Did you willingly cast the spell or skill in question in front of an unauthorized party?"

Jaune shook his head. "No, well, at least not directly. It's like preloading a shield to block one blow in combat, a few of my professions abilities can cast the spell. The Tome of Courage does it passively as long as the tome is summoned. It applied the spell when I first summoned the tome while in the dorm."

Ozpin nodded, it matched the description Taiyang had given him for a similar skill of his. "Do you know why it activated?"

"Well sir, I was confused at first, I mean, It's never done before. It doesn't do it when I trip or such, or when a teammate gives me a firm pat on the back. It must have seen a difference between those things and Cardin's movements, and classified his as an attack."

"So it requires a hostile agent, how fascinating. That suggests a threat classification system on the skill level, something we'll have to investigate later." Jaune didn't look forward to seeing how that would be tested.

Ozpin continued after taking a sip of coffee. "You excused it as part of your semblance per your report. Is the spell's effect in line with how your semblance functions?"
"I've no idea, I've yet to actually unlock my semblance." Jaune said with a shrug. "But it was the best I could come up with on the spot, after all semblances do all kinds of stuff, many of which don't make a lot of sense."

It was Glynda who spoke next, turning to Ozpin. "It is possible though, headmaster. We do not know enough about how professions are assigned to rule it out, and statistically many students with known semblances align with at least some of the known effects of a profession. I'm still working on compiling a list for analysis, but we still lack details for many of the professions."

Ozpin nodded, considering the implications and deciding the next course of action. "In terms of disclosure, the event is relatively minor, the core of your abilities would appear to be still confidential. Your excuse is also believable, and in line with the general behavior of a semblance. If your semblance is massively counter to what you have professed it to be we may have a problem, but we can deal with that once we know what your semblance is. I see no reason to restrict your movement or more drastic punishment at this time."

Jaune let out a breath of relief and slumped back in his chair.

"That is not to say vigilance isn't required, Mr Arc. You have professed an effect, and now must maintain that cover, though that does not mean openly flaunt it. It may be best to maintain the illusion that such effects are possible, but not to be expected every encounter. This incident also highlights how easy it is to be exposed, and every action, no matter how minor, must be done with care and discretion. There is a lovely lecture professor Oobleck gives to third years on the subject of counterintelligence during the great war, Currently scheduled for Wednesday of this week. You will attend the lecture and check out the recommended reading from the library and summarize your thoughts on it to me in say, four pages, Wednesday after next."

"Yes sir."

"I could also use some help in my research, stop by my office each Saturday morning, 10:00 AM. Should only take us a few weeks to complete the task in question."

'A semblance to fake, a report, and detention with the headmaster.. Joy" Jaune thought to himself. Life was growing increasingly complicated. "Yes sir, will that be all, headmaster?" Ozpin nodded his head, and Jaune motioned to stand, but was stopped as Glynda spoke up.

"Before you depart, there is one other thing we need to discuss."

"What would that be, professor?"

"Frankly put, your lack of participation in my class has been noticed. There are rumors of favoritism and students doubting your ability, and I cannot excuse your absence in the ring. I know from personal experience how difficult holding back on your profession's skills can be, how confident are you that you can suppress your professions effects and participate in class?"

It was a loaded question and Jaune knew it. Professor Goodwitch and the headmaster had access to the logs from the private training rooms, and knew the answer before Jaune could even voice it.

"I'm confident I can, yes. Well, minus any passive stuff beyond my control."

"In that case, you would be wise to expect to participate in tomorrow's class. But do remember the
guild has another mission scheduled for Monday afternoon, and plan accordingly."

Jaune gulped, "I understand. I'll do my best to prepare, for both things that is."

"In that case, you are excused, Mr Arc."

"Thank you headmaster, professor Goodwitch." Jaune rose from his chair and retreated to the elevator, eager to leave the office and return to his team.

As the doors closed, Jaune leaned against a wall and sighed. "Out of one fire and into another".

[Jaune: Done, looks like I won't be majorly punished, at least for now. Headmaster assigned me a report and I have to help him for the next few Saturdays.]

[Ruby: That's great! Well, I mean it's not fun or awesome, but...you know. Better than the alternatives.]

[Jaune: No argument there.]

[Nora: So what's the plan then?]

[Jaune: I have to maintain the illusion this was part of my semblance, and Goodwitch told me i'll be sparring tomorrow. I suppose it's off to the training rooms for now, can't be too prepared after all.]

[Pyrrha: Mind if I tag along? I'm feeling like a workout myself.]

[Jaune: Sounds good to me, more the merrier]

[Yang: Looking forward to seeing you in action finally!]

Jaune sighed again before whispering to himself, "At least someone is.". It wasn't the original plan for the afternoon, but situation being what it is, training was his best option.

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Combat class arrived the next morning, and true to her word, Glynda had called Jaune down to participate in sparring after the lecture portion of the class had concluded. Soon after Jaune found himself standing in the sparring ring, running though some last minute warm ups and trying to mentally get into the match. He was wearing the same outfit he'd first shown up to Beacon in, leaving his looted armor in the JNPR dorm room. Jaune was working toward crafting a set of armor to replace it for use in class, but his progress was slow.

In the stands teams RWBY and JNPR were shouting words of confidence, and waving little team flags. Jaune wondered just where those were coming from, actually. "Maybe they sell them at the school store?" Jaune thought to himself. He shook the thought from his head and tried to concentrate.

Jaune would be lying if he said he wasn't nervous. Heck, he would be lying if he said he wasn't
terrified. And not just because of his opponent, who had helpfully volunteered before Glynda had a chance to choose an opponent. Cardin was nice like that, if you asked Cardin at least. Jaune doubted his volunteering was out of the goodness of his heart.

There was no turning back now, the class, his guild, everyone would see the truth of his skills as a huntsman laid bare, and that wasn't going to be a flattering picture. He had spared against machines, and a bit with his teammates, his clumsy attacks and even clumsier defense was largely excused as his trying to hold back his professional skills. Truth be told, he'd failed to win even a single spar against his teammates, sometimes failing to land even a single clean hit in a match, though he was getting better overall.

Jaune silently repeated a mantra to himself, "this was no different than fighting the grimm, just be confident. You can do this." Optimism seemed like his best option here, after all Cardin much far less scary than the grimm had been. The pessimistic side of Jaune reminded him that he didn't have the benefit of his profession here like he had with the grimm, nor had confidence done much for his interactions with woman during initiation.

Cardin arrived in the ring, looking quite smirk and confident, smile wide on his face. "Good to finally see you participating, Jaune. Was thinking I'd never get a chance to repay you for all you and your team have been doing lately."

"Oh, it was no problem, really." Jaune wasn't really paying attention to what Cardin had said, instead trying to visualize some of the sword and shield tactics he'd studied. Judging by the rage on Cardin's face, and the jeers and whistles from the stands, this was probably a mistake. Jaune readied his sword and shield, the ones he had crafted the previous week. He really needed to name them.

As the professor one again went over the rules, Jaune noticed a message from his partner on his UI.

[Pyrrha to Jaune: You look nervous]

[Jaune to Pyrrha: That's one way to describe it. Any advice?]

[Pyrrha to Jaune: Spars aren't about winning or losing, they are about improving your skills. Pick something you want to refine, and treat this as practice.]

[Jaune to Pyrrha: Sounds reasonable. Wish me luck?]

[Pyrrha to Jaune: Good Luck!]

Jaune smiled at his partner, then refocused on Cardin. Glynda gave Jaune a quick glance over, hoping that the youth wouldn't cause a far greater incident in the ring than he had the day before in the hallway. As Glynda signaled for the match to begin, Jaune went over Pyrrha's advice. "Pick something to practice eh? Well here goes." Jaune readied one of the shield stances he'd read about, bracing himself for the inevitable attack to come.

And come it did. Cardin wasted no time before rushing forward with a war cry and a swing of his mace at Jaune's midsection. Jaune hopped a step back dodging the blow, before attempting to counter with a sword slash, which Cardin easily intercepted.

Cardin smiled at the force of the blow. "That all you got? This will be a short fight."
"Probably, yeah"

Again Cardin swung, this time at Jaune's shoulder, which Jaune redirected with his shield, but made no follow up, instead stepping back to increase the distance, shield back at the ready. Another swing came, only for Jaune to parry with his sword, attempting a simple follow up shield bash, which had a negligible effect on Cardin's aura. Cardin's retaliatory strike with the hilt of his mace to Jaune's thigh connected, pinging off Jaune's aura and taking out a noticeable slice.

Jaune stumbled back and once again returned to his defensive stance, the two combatants circling. It seemed to Jaune that Cardin was inviting him to go on the offensive. Jaune held his ground however, and made no move toward his opponent. The bait ignored, Cardin snarled again and attacked with a combination of swings that Jaune did his best to deflect or dodge, not without some close scraps and one attempted kneeing to the groin by Cardin, which Jaune thankfully intercepted with his own leg, though the move threw him off balance. Seeing an opening, Cardin used the force of his bulk to push Jaune to the ground, Jaune rolling away from a downward follow up strike that no doubt would have put Jaune out of the fight had it connected.

Jaune quickly got back on his feet, and moved to create more distance. "Should have stayed down, Arc. The ground suits you." Cardin said, to the laughter of his team.

"I'll pass, the floo rwax is hard to get off one's armor".

The fight continued on, Cardin pressing the offense and Jaune dancing around his blows, clearly on the defense. Jaune ducked under a swing at his head, attempting to counter with a blow to Cardin's legs to little effect. An overhead smash was sidestepped, though Cardin was ready for Jaune's follow up shield bash.

Jaune knew his attack pattern had been deciphered by Cardin, as Cardin forced him to step back again and again, Jaune's blows now too easily telegraphed to have much chance of landing a clean hit. Try as he might, he was unable to dodge all of Cardin's blows, often avoiding a large strike only to take a smaller one. Jaune found that his follow ups lacked the impact of Cardin's, and his opponent's aura was falling much slower than his own. Jaune could feel the pull of his profession, and the power it offered, but pushed it down deep instead of himself as he had learned in training with his team.

"Quit with the dancing around like a scared kitten, stand and fight already!" Instead of a direct blow, Cardin's next attack was a ground strike, sending a fiery cascade along the ground toward Jaune. Jaune executed a leaping roll, dodging the dust attack but all but walking into a follow up swing by Cardin's mace. Jaune could feel the hair on his head tingle as he barely ducked the blow, forced to move even closer to Cardin. Now in close quarters range, Cardin used his greater bulk to push Jaune around, moving into Jaune's personal space and denying him the ability to properly swing his sword.

Cardin struck Jaune's midsection with a blow that would have drove the breath from Jaune if he hadn't had aura to soften the hit. Jaune retaliated with a pommel smash to Cardin's shoulder that left his arm numb.

Headbutts, elbows, knees, they struck with whatever they could as the fight turned into a straight up brawl. Jaune stuck close, denying Cardin the full effect of his attacks, while using his shield and sword pommel as clubs to attack wherever he could, his hands glowing white with aura. By the time they separated, both were missing a good chunk of Aura, sweat and spittle flowing freely. Several boys in the class were cheering, as such brutal close quarters slug fests were rare at
Beacon, most huntsmen and huntresses tending to avoid them.

Cardin, tired of the pommeling, forced Jaune further back, creating separate as Jaune stumbled backward and nearly fell to the ground. Jaune shook the cobwebs out of his head and tried to resume a defensive stance. Jaune's UI laid out the result of the exchange to date. Jaune had taken off a full third of Cardin's Aura, while Jaune himself was hovering just over half. The two had exchanged nearly the same number of blows, but the combination of superior physical strength and better armor coverage had let Cardin come out on top. Jaune would have to improve both if he wanted to capitalize on such tactics in the future. Jaune had to admit to himself he'd done better than he'd expected, given the haphazard nature of the attacks.

Jaune's mind raced though every tactic he had studied, searching for a way to neutralize Cardin's advantages and move the flow of the fight into his favor. He lacked to technique of Pyrrha or the raw speed of Ruby, and couldn't rely on ranged attacks like some other students. If Cardin was a grimm in the field Jaune knew his profession would easily level the playing field, but that wasn't an option. The plans he did come up with would fail more due to Jaune's lack of finesse and skill rather than the actual merit of the tactic.

The two resumed circling each other, still catching their breath. Jaune sighed, seeing only one outcome to the fight, and remembering Glynda's words from the previous day. As Cardin squared up for another melee, Jaune sheathed his sword. "Professor, I yield."

"Giving up Arc? Figures you'd run away."

"I've got a mission later this afternoon, I need to preserve my aura for that. I wouldn't want to put my team at risk over something as irrelevant as a classroom spar." Jaune of course had a heal skill ready to go, but felt it unwise to waste such a thing, not that he could use it in class anyways. In the end, he'd gone with an age old tactic: losing a battle to win a war.

"A loss is a loss, Jaune. You should get used to how they feel."

"Enough." Glynda said, marking Cardin as the victor to the cheers of his team. "The match goes to Mr Winchester. However, I must point out to the class that Jaune's yielding was a sound tactical choice given circumstances. A victory here is meaningless if it results in a defeat at the hands of the grimm. A loss here is at worse a blow to the ego, a loss there can and will mean injury or death, to yourself, to your team, or to the people you are suppose to be protecting."

Jaune nodded, and returned to his seat, ignoring any jeers from team CDRL. Tactically sound decision or not, it was still a public loss, the first for his team or the guild for that matter. If Jaune expected looks of shame or anger on their faces, he was sorely mistaken.

"Good job Jaune!" Ruby said, proud as always of her guild mates and ever optimistic.

"Looked a bit like a bar fight there at the end, Ladykiller." Yang said, throwing a few mock punches. Yang had to admit the fight had been entertaining, if somewhat at Jaune's expense.

Blake smiled, "You'd know a thing or two about that subject, wouldn't you Yang?"

"That was more of a nightclub, actually."
Jaune rubbed the back of his head, both in embarrassment and due to being a bit sore due to some errant blows by Cardin. "Thanks, though I'm not sure I deserve any praise for that one. I'm sure there was a way to come out on top, I just couldn't find it."

Weiss looked up from her notes, the heiress having written down Cardin and Jaune's strengths and weaknesses for later use. She was sitting on the far side of Team RWBY's seats, away from her partner. "Surprised you didn't use your 'semblance'."

"I didn't want to broadcast how 'it' functions. It's got some drawbacks I didn't want others to know about yet."

"A wise decision, it's good to have something in reserve." Ren gave his teammate a pat on the back. Jaune slumped down, emotions playing on his face as he mentally ran though the fight, and his various inadequacies.

"Don't be so hard on yourself, circumstances considered, you did quite well."

"Thanks Pyrrha." Jaune Took a sip of water, and tried to relax. Glynda called out the next two fighters, which diverted attention off him and back to the ring, something Jaune was quite grateful for. The diversion gave him more time to think about his performance, and he honestly hated what he had seen. Even a loss had its' rewards however, he had learned a thing or two about defense. Not to mention the guild rewards noted Jaune as he pulled up the PVP track in his UI, which listed the Beacon first year track as now unlocked, with a small amount of XP awarded so far. Jaune knew that if he ever actually planned on completing the track and gaining it's promised rewards, he'd have to step up and start winning matches, a daunting problem given his opponents had trained for years.

Jaune banished the thoughts from his head as he sat up and watched the next fight, determined to learn what he could. He also began to look forward to the days mission, where he'd be far more a useful resource.

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Jaune and Nora waved from the rock they had been resting on as Team RWBY joined them in a meadow, the designated meet up spot for the back half of the days mission.

"Hey Jaune, Nora! Sorry we are late, had an issue with a rather uncooperative sensor and an even less cooperative flock of nevermore."

Nora shrugged, "Eh, occupational hazard."

"Everyone okay?"

"Just the usual Jaune, nothing aura won't take care of." Yang appeared to be telling the truth, with the only signs of battle on team RWBY's features being a bit of dirt and grime. How about your side of things"
"It was a cakewalk! We ran into like thirty beowolves and a dozen Ursas and a griffin or three, but
Ren was like 'wa cha!' and Pyrrha was all 'Hah Slice!' and I was like 'boom swing smash' and Jaune
here handed out buffs like candy and teleported like a total cheater! Easy as pancakes." Nora
smiled, thumbs up at her recollection of the day.

Team RWBY turned as one to Jaune, who shrugged, "The count may be off a bit, but yeah, that's
accurate."

Ruby was quite grateful that Jaune normally gave his team's reports. "Soo...where's the rest of the
team?"

"Pyrrha and Ren are scouting around a bit with the professor, something about some odd sensor
reading a short distance away. They should be back in a few minutes."

"Cool, cool."

Jaune yielded his place on the rock to Blake, who was thankful to get off her feet.

The others gathered around where they could and took a breather, reaching into their bags for
canteens and snacks while they awaited the return of the rest of the guild.

Conversations stopped as the meadow was swept with the sounds of gunfire and trees breaking,
Sounds that were getting closer.

"Those aren't happy sounds."

"No Ruby, no they aren't." Jaune said, facing the rough direction of the noses. "Maybe they ran
into trouble?"

[Pyrrha: Ran into a grimm, heading your way].

"Answers that question. Must be a big grimm to cause that large a disturbance." Blake, like Jaune,
was trying to get a proper bearing on the source. "There, to the northeast!"

"Alright guildmates, get into cover! Try to put something between you and it, at least until we
know what we are up against." Team RWBY, as well as Jaune and Nora took cover behind the
rocks, and well as some nearby trees, the group spread out in a rough semi circle. Ruby had her
weapon in rifle mode, looking through the scope toward the expected grimm. The sounds of
gunfire where closer now, and they could hear what sounded like booms of thunder and shattering
ice.

"Must be something fierce if Glynda, Ren and Pyrrha couldn't take it down. Champion maybe?"
Yang had her gauntlets deployed, and was hopping around a bit to get her adrenaline pumping.

"Hey, we got one of those meta event thingies just now!" Nora was pointing to the right, before re-
shouldering her grenade launcher.

His shield deployed and sword at the ready Jaune checked his UI. "Defeat the Champion Creep.
Looks like Yang's right, I have one question though."

Weiss turned in his direction, already working on summoning up some glyphs for a barrage,
"What's that?"
"What's a Creep?"

As soon as the words left his mouth, Ren and Pyrrha burst from the treeline. "Pyrrha, Ren, Over here!" The two moved to cover near Jaune and Nora, weapons set to the ranged modes. A moment later Glynda arrived, using her semblance to rapidly create a barrier of fallen trees behind her. Glynda took her position in the middle of the line and quickly raised a short ice wall in front of her for cover.

The tree barricade was reduced to toothpicks a moment later as a massive Creep type grimm broke through, and shattered the air with a roar. The best was massive, heavily armored and out for blood. It's skin was pock marked with the results it's fight with Ren, Pyrrha and Glynda.

Weiss pointed at the grimm "That's a Creep"

"Thanks Weiss, though I kinda figured that out." Jaune raised his blade as a signal "Let's give it a proper welcome, eh? Fire!

As one the guild opened up on the Creep. Which reacted by crouching down and wrapping itself with it's long, thick tail. Everyone with a ranged weapon fired, while Glynda and Weiss hurled shards of ice, stone and fireballs at the grimm. By the end of the barrage, the grimm had been covered in a thick cloud of dust and smoke.

Hidden as it was, their UI's were still able to get a read on it. Despite the ferocity of the attack, they had hardly made a dent in it's HP.

"That's It?! Seriously?"

"It's too well armored Yang, it's struggling off the attacks."

"I can see that Blake, what now?"

The sounds of the grimm moving sounded in the meadow, and Blake's eyes went wide, "Move!"

The grimm launched itself out of the obscuring cloud in a massive somersault, vectoring directly at the position occupied by team RWBY. They quickly scattered just before the grimm landed with a shock wave and set the ground trembling. The creep quickly recovered, rising back to its feet and searching for its prey. As it raised its head, it was greeted by the sight of Yang's fist.

"Smile, Ugly!" Yang struck at it with a combo of fiery punches backed by shotgun blasts, and for her trouble received a vicious head swipe from the creep that sent her flying back and into a tree. The grim quickly spun around, swiping at Weiss and Black with its tail. Weiss dodged by a hair's breadth with rush of water, Blake making use of a quick clone swap to avoid the attack.

"JNPR, Professor, open up on it, we have to peel it away from team RWBY and give them a chance to regroup. Check your fire though, we don't want any friendly fire here!"

"Right Jaune!" Pyrrha and the rest of the team didn't need to be told twice, giving the grimm another volley. Glynda for her part laid down a field of ice and razor sharp icicles, hoping to hobble the beast, before sending a trident of water at Yang, the spells water rejuvenating her aura.

The distraction worked, and the grimm turned to face the greater threat, smashing its way through
Glynda's ice field en route to attack team JNPR's position, charging with a speed that seemed impossible given it's bulk. Regrouped and re positioned, Ruby herself cast a well in its path, hopping to delay or hobble the grimm, to little effect.

"Nothing is slowing it down! It's got to have a weak spot somewhere."

"Have you not studied this one in class, students?" Glynda yelled, sending several bolts of lightning into the grimms flank.

Nora answered in between grenade volleys, "Not yet, Professor Port was going to get to this one next week! My goggles are suggesting it's belly however."

"Your goggles highlight weaknesses? That's awesome!" Ruby had to get herself a pair of those.

Glynda nodded as she dropped a fire fang on the grimms position. "Ms. Valkyrie is correct, it's unarmored underneath."

"Are they normally this large?"

"No Ms. Rose, this one is extraordinary."

Jaune sheathed his sword and summoned his Tome of Courage, empowering team JNPR with a recollection of the unbroken lines of the heroes of old. The grimm, now upon them swiped at the team with its tail, the attacks affected nullified by their increased defense and the aegis effects, and its energy redirected back at the grimm causing the beast to recoil in pain. Nora took the opportunity to launch a nasty surprise of her own in the form of an acid grenade aimed right at the grimms face. The attack worked, and the grimm stumbled back in pain.

"We need to take out it's legs if we want to expose it's underside." Glynda shouted.

"Right!" Pyrrha, Ren and Blake spirited at the grim, Ren peppering it with gunfire as the the group closed it. Blake arrived first, dodging a headbutt with a reality distorting dodge and a slice to one of the grimms legs. Pyrrha only managed a single swipe before the grimm battered her away with its tail, sending her flying despite her attempts to mitigate the blow with her shield.

"Pyrrha!" Jaune was gone in a flash, reappearing in a cascade of blue light directly beside his partner, the light soothing her wounds and boosting her aura.

"You okay?"

"I am now, thanks Jaune. You'll have to remember that one"

Ren, still in close quarters, fell into griffin stance, jumping into the grimm as it attempted to strike him with its head. Ren ran along its back, firing round after round into the cheep, before executing a graceful leap, carving into the base of the tail as he fell. The grimm attempted to crush him in retaliation, Ren evading the steps as a comet of ice smashed into the grimm courtesy of Glynda, dazing the creep. The massive creep roared in anger before leaping at her position with another somersault, Glynda protecting herself with stone armor as the grimm impacted.

Glynda fired as she ran, barely avoiding a tail strike as Yang and Ruby drew its attention with a barrage of red and green fire. The sisters lured the rampaging beast back into the clearing and into another attack run on its legs by Weiss and Blake that failed to do any significant damage.
Nora fired several ice dust grenades at the Creep's feet, the beast avoiding them with surprising skill. "This isn't working, it's too fast to get a clear shot at it's legs!"

Pyrrha back on her feet prepared for another run at it's leg before Jaune stopped her with a hand on her shoulder.

Jaune shouted "I have a plan, avoid it's legs, aim for the tail!"

"The tail?! Why?" Yang answered, currently engaged in trying to catch the grimm in a fire effect field.

"It's using the tail for balance!"

Understanding shined in Ruby's glowing silver eyes, "So if we cut that off, it will stumble and we can take it out!"

Glynda smiled, her normally well kept hair falling over her eyes "Excellent idea Mr Arc! If you have a way of slowing it down, go for it, everyone else, aim for that tail!"

Ruby called down everything she could think of, arms cloaked in necrotic fire and strange words on her lips in a bid to buy her guild mates a window to strike. Weiss shot off on a glyph, diving into the ground just as the grimm noticed her, and erupted from the ground below its tail, slashing at the wound Ren had previously made, deepening it before retreating.

Pyrrha was next, aiming to attack the same wound as the others. Her approached was noticed, the grimm turning as it prepared to counter her charge. To her amazement, Pyrrha covered the distance in a flash, vanishing from sight and reappearing next to the tail in time to deliver a punishing combo of slashes that bit deep into muscle and bone.

"Way to go Pyrrha! Taking after me it seems, eh partner?"

Pyrrha had no time consider Jaune's comment as she dodged away from the grimm, now screaming in agony at it's blooded tail. Jaune himself had shifted his weapon into broadsword mode, and readied to attack. "Ruby, lets hit it together, it looks almost busted!"

"Right!" Ruby yelled, shifting into war scythe mode and zooming off in a burst of rose petals. Yang and Nora provided covering fire as the two team leaders made their approach, but watched in frustration as the grimm prepared to leap.

"Not this time!" Blake cried, hands glowing with energy as her fingers drew an intricate pattern in imitation of what she'd seen Ruby do. A rune in the shape of a death's head moth appeared below the grimm accompanied by spinning watch hands and the sound of chimes. The grimm floundered under the wells, ravaged by the effects of chaotic space and time. The creep Immobilized for a moment, Ruby and Jaune executed a simultaneous cross slash at the foes tail, severing it in a blaze of blue and green fire and taking a huge chunk out of its hp.

The creep stumbled forward in agony, unable to balance with the sudden loss of counter weight. Yang rocketed forward with a double blast of her gauntlets, her eyes red and her form cloaked in fire.

"Eat this!" she screamed, laying into the grimm's head with a flaming flurry of blows, the last
upperrcut knocking it clean off it's feet, the belly at last exposed. Jaune thrust his weapon into the ground, a large magical circle appearing in a glow of blue, rooting the grimm in place.

"Ms. Schnee!" Glynda shouted as she summoned forth a large stone shard which hung in the air before her.

"Read my mind professor!" Weiss summoned some glyphs and coated the shard with ice, creating something not unlike a large icy dagger. With a burst of wind, Glynda hurled the dagger at the downed creep, the blade running it through and bursting out the creatures back.

The champion creep thrashed around in its death throws before expiring, HP hitting zero. For a few seconds there was nothing but silence in the meadow, before the calm was shattered by the cheers of the assembled huntresses and huntsmen.

"Another victory for the roses!" Ruby cheered, first raised high.

"Excellent job, everyone!" Glynda brushed some dust off herself, doing her best to fix her hair before giving up. "Fighting an unknown grimm can be a great challenge, not to mention one of such...statue."

"Our performance was exemplary."

"Yeah what Weiss said, We kicked ass!"

"Language Yang!"

Yang blushed, "Sorry Ruby."

Ruby zipped over to Blake, who was standing still and staring at her still outstretched hand. "Did I just..."

"Yep!" cried Ruby, "That my dear was a well, and it was awesome!"

"Huh"

"It was all clock like and stuff, I guess that explains your profession name."

Blake smiled, "That is does Ruby, that it does." Blake had so much reading to do when she got back, it was like a veil had been lifted before her eyes. 'Some people say that time was an illusion, but this is taking it a bit too literally.' Thought Blake as she rejoined the rest of her team.

"Was that a shadowstep I saw there, Pyrrha?"

Pyrrha was smiling ear to ear, "Seems like it, apparently I can do those now." Pyrrha couldn't resist letting out a small laugh.

Jaune gave his partner a pat on the back "As Ruby would say, it was awesome."

Nora kicked a stone and mock pouted. "Man, I want cool teleport powers."

"You and me both, Nora." Ren said, arm around his friend and partner.
Ruby clapped, "beastly foe vanquished, meta event completed, you know what that means folks!"

Yang threw her hands into the air "Happy dance and loot time!"

Glynda watched as the students broke out into dance. Yang high fived Weiss, before grabbing her by the hands and forcibly swinging her around, not giving Weiss an excuse not to participate. Blake and Ruby where shaking their hips and getting down to a song only they could hear.

Team JNPR watched in awe, before Jaune turned to his team and shrugged. "Eh, why not?" Nora booped Ren's nose before linking arms with Ren and dancing in a circle. Jaune and Pyrrha were dancing something more at home in a ballroom than a battlefield.

Pyrrha laughed and smiled as Jaune gave her a twirl. "I didn't know you could dance Jaune!"

"You pick up a lot with seven sisters in the house."

Glynda smiled at the scene, but resisted the urge to dance herself. She had a reputation to maintain after all. Her smile dipped as she considered the grimm carcass before her, wondering how such a large grimm could have evaded the sensor network and gotten so close to Beacon and Vale. Any other student team could have been severely injured or killed, a beast of this size and ferocity normally resulted professional huntsmen being deployed to terminate it. She'd have to bring the matter up to the headmaster as soon as they all returned.

The revelry concluded, the students rushed to loot the massive grimm and the large chest that had appeared out of nowhere.

Glynda examined the newly appeared chest closely, "Interesting, so this is what you pulled the equipment out of during initiation?"

"It didn't appear on the camera feeds?"

"For me it did not, Ms Rose. Only the headmaster could see it."

"Weird." Ruby shrugged. "Now, lets see what we got! You too professor, you stuck the last blow an all."

One by one the guildmates reached into the chest and pulled out their hard won rewards.

"Okay everyone, let's hear it, whatcha get? Show me show me!" Ruby bounced around in excitement.

"Looks like Blake and I got us some new weapons!" Nora said, arm around Blake. Both had weapons heavily featuring the same green crystal like substance that formed the weapons Weiss and Ren had received.

"Gloves here, perfect size too. How about you Pyrrha?"

"A new chest piece it seems, Jaune." Pyrrha looked at the piece in question, it's hard crystal plates shone a subtle green, bringing out her eyes. It was bound in leather and what felt like chain mail in places.

"Leggings here, how about you sis?"
"New skirt! And it's part of the grimm set!" The skirt looked like it was spun of a soft grimm hair, and was decorated with bits of grimm bone and red accents. Strange runes decorated it in places. "All I need is the top and this set will be completed!"

"Boots here, how about you Ren?" Weiss approved of the stylish wedge heels, and their subtle leaf motif and crystal accents.

"New jacket, it's quite lovely, actually." Nora nodded her approval, the jacket was leather with reinforced armor scales in places, in a wrap style similar to his original. It looked quite sturdy.

"And you professor?" As Ruby spoke the question, all eyes turned to Glynda to see what she had received.

Glynda raised an eyebrow at the pair of thigh high heeled boots she'd received.

Yang whistled at the sight of them, "Wow those are killer, makes me wonder what the rest of that outfit will look like." Glynda, and several of the other girls nodded in agreement.

"Alright students, it appears this bit of trouble is over, I commend you all for your superb performance. When confronted by an unknown foe many novices will flee or panic, but you responded in a coordinated and effective fashion. You utilized teamwork, and took charge of the situation forcing the grimm to a situation of your advantage rather than its. If this was a academic mission, you'd all get very high marks."

"It's what we do here in the Roses, isn't that right guild mates?"

Everyone cheered in response to Ruby's question.

"That being said, let's take a few minutes to recover and rest, then begin training. We still have time to practice the skills you appear to have picked up in the battle, this time against something that is hopefully less of a brute." The students laughed, and set about organizing for the remainder of the training session.

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The rest of the afternoon had passed without much issue, night coming far sooner than most of the students would have liked. Dinner eaten and homework completed, the teams were back in their dorms and passing what was left of the evening engaging in their own pursuits.

Jaune laid on his bed, staring at the ceiling and contemplating the day. His inadequacies in the ring clashed with his performance in the field, performance he knew was due in no small part to his being a Firebrand. "No, it wasn't just that" Jaune thought to himself.

A moments concentration later and the Tome of Courage appeared in his hands with a blue flash. The stories were beautiful, full of heroics, tactics, and outright legendary acts. If the tome had taught him anything however, it was that few heroes stood alone. They fought side by side with brothers, sisters, teams, and armies. People they knew had their backs, and who fight for them,
with them, and do so gladly.

Jaune looked at his team and smiled. Nora was at her desk, tinkering with something that, to Jaune at least, looked like a mechanical orb like fish with a propeller attached to it. Given the pile of parts next to her, Nora clearly intended to assemble several more of them.

Ren and Pyrrha where sitting face to face, Ren instructing her in one of his meditation techniques. Both reasoning that looking inward may reveal the answers they sought in the development of their own professions. Jaune was tempted to join them, hoping to discover his own semblance and on a deeper level, why he'd been worthy of this power of his, and of such a wonderful group to call his team.

His team, both to be a part of and to command. A team he counted on and trusted with his life, and whom trusted him with theirs. The thought made him sick, what right did he have to such trust if he couldn't be truthful to them? He ran his hands over the Tome of Courage once more, the heroes of old crying out, telling him to do what he knew he needed to do. Part of him wanted to resist, to earn this by himself, but he couldn't afford to do that, not when they faced death on a weekly basis. They had to know, and he had to be strong enough to tell them.

Jaune sat up in bed and turned to face his team. "Um, hey folks can I borrow a few minutes of your time?" One by one they stopped their activities and turned his direction.

Pyrrha spoke first, always open to converse with her partner. "Sure Jaune, what's up?"

All eyes upon him, Jaune took a breath and thumbed the tome one more. "There is something I need to tell you all, something about me and how I came to be here at Beacon."
Jaune sat before his team, eyes upon him and eager to hear whatever announcement he had gathered them for. His stomach in ropes and his mouth dry, Jaune searched for the words, and the courage, to say what he needed to say.

"Trust. It's what makes a good team into a great one. Trust that we are on the right path, that our eyes and ears are open to the danger which stalks us. It's trust that guards our backs, our flanks, what keeps us safe. Trust in ones teammates, in their skills, and in their resolve. Without it, we may as well just lay down and let the grimm take us."

Jaune stood and began to pace. "And it's in my trust in you I place my fate, for I feel like I've betrayed your trust, and one way or the other, I've got to explain myself. Not to justify my actions, not to earn my place here, but because I can't go another day without you knowing. I can't go on another mission, attend another class, or even look you in the eye knowing I've not shown myself to be worthy of the trust you place in me, or to even walk among you as a comrade, let alone as your leader."

Concern shown on Pyrrha's face, it wasn't like her partner to act like this. "What...what's this about, Jaune? You stand here with us because you've earned it, same as any of us. That's why you're at Beacon."

Jaune shook his head. "That's why you are at Beacon, why Ren and Nora are as well. But Me? No, I'm not like the rest of you, I didn't earn my spot here. My skills, well, you saw what they were in class. Haphazard, clumsy, and lacking in any sort of finesse."

"Difficulties are to be expected given the circumstances" Ren said, "Adapting to our professions hasn't been the easiest thing, having to train ourselves not to use them in non sanctioned venues has made the task even more difficult."

"But that's just it, I'm not stumbling around because I'm holding back. I'm stumbling around because I don't know what I'm doing. Sure I've read books, watched videos, and observed people with far greater skills than I practice and train, but that's no substitute for actual training, for actual skill."

Pyrrha shook her head, "You were clearly skilled enough to get into this academy. That speaks volumes for your potential."

"It really doesn't, Pyrrha. I didn't get here by excelling in a combat school like Signal or Sanctum. I didn't train as an apprentice under a veteran huntsman ether. I wasn't accepted by demonstrating my strengths and proving myself worthy in a field test. I got into Beacon by way of a lie and some fake transcripts."

"That's...very reckless. What drove you to do such a thing?"

Jaune answered in a voice that echoed with frustration. "I did it, Ren, Because this is what I've always wanted to be. A huntsman, a hero, like the ones of old." Jaune said, holding up the tome of courage. "A warrior like my father, my grandfather, and his father before him. But hard as I tried,
no matter how many hours of exercises and study, I was never quite good enough. So I took the
easy way out, I cut in line ahead of some other student who probably deserved it more. I can't
apologize to them, but I can to you, I owe you that much at least."

Jaune paced some more, his team silent at the exchange so far. "And to make matters worse, I'm
given such an extraordinary gift upon entrance. A firebrand, a warrior powered by ancient acts of
valor and heroism of people far greater than I, the sort of people who I idealized as a youth. That I
still idolize even now. And I feel the weight of their judgement weighing down upon me every
time I look in the mirror. I don't even know what looks back at me when I do these days, is it the
weak boy stuck in a tree while his friends fight valiantly for their lives, or am I the firebrand
flinging magic and lore around as a weapon, burning away the darkness. A Weakling, or a hero in
the making? Deep inside, I fear one more than the other, but I can't seem to decide on which that
is."

The room stood quiet as Jaune looked down at the tome, running his fingers across it's cover,
hoping perhaps that his outpouring would silence the judgement within.

It was Pyrrha who broke the silence. "I'm shocked to say the least, I'm sure the others feel the
same." she said, looking to Ren and Nora, their faces unreadable. "Why tell us this now?"

"Like I said, it's about trust. If we are to work together, I need you to understand how and why I
came to be here. That is if we are to work together, if you decide against that, it's fine. Say the
word and i'll come clean to Goodwitch, and probably be out of your hair by morning. If you can't
trust me to fight by your side, then I'll gladly yield my position to someone you can."

"You...You'd be willing to abandon your dream because of us?"

"If it's what best for the team, than yeah I would Pyrrha. I can always study, train and hope to
become a huntsman by a more honorable means. It might take months, years, who knows. The old
me would have wanted to go at this alone, to improve by my own hand without aid or not at all.
But now? I can't see myself excelling at Beacon without you all, not after what we have been
through. And by that I mean not having you carry me the next few years, but more, being able to
learn with you, improve together, and build off each other's strengths. This goes for both my skill
as a huntsman, and my skill as a firebrand."

Jaune plopped back down on his bed, "Well there you have it, the real Jaune Arc, a fraud playing
at huntsman. Take it as you will, I trust you all to do what's best for the team, and what's best for
yourselves."

Silence returned to the room as Ren, Nora and Pyrrha contemplated Jaune's words. A silent
conversation spread among them, as they exchanged a flurry of private messages. A consensus was
reached after a few minutes, though it felt like hours to Jaune.

"We're not buying it."

Jaune's eyes widened in shock. "Nora?"

"Yeah, this isn't you. We've only known you a few weeks, but I can honestly say I don't believe this
is you. You aren't some fraud playing at huntsman, you are a huntsman. The proof is in the
pudding."

Nora crossed her legs and looked Jaune in the eye. "A fraud runs, they hide, they let others do the
work and they take the credit. I've seen their type growing up, folks who had money or influence and wanted to play hero. They washed out, got injured, or ran when things got tough. Not you though."

Nora walked over to Jaune, sitting beside him and taking him by the shoulders. "When push comes to shove, you're there shoving right back. During initiation, you didn't hesitate to call out commands when you saw enemy weaknesses we could exploit. In the forest, you've planned out strategies to carry the day, and pressed the attack when you needed to, when we needed you to. You watched our backs, doing everything you could to protect us or keep us in the fight." "I agree with Nora here." Ren said with a nod, "What you lack in experience you make up with ingenuity and courage. As leader you have placed our well being as your highest priority, and you have put in the time to train with us, to help us with our skills, and to help the team excel in our missions and our professions. Personal glory seems to be a distant concern compared to the well being of the team. That's a better feeling than I get from some of the other team leaders."

"That is not to say there is not room for improvement, Jaune." Pyrrha took a seat beside him. "It took courage to tell us this, to risk your career. You'll have to put in even greater effort from this point on, as you have a lot of catching up to do in the skills department. Be prepared to expend a great deal of blood, sweat and tears. We'll push you to the limit and beyond, in all areas as anything less would truly be disrespectful to our peers and to yourself. Personally, I can help you improve your combat skills."

"And I can help with any academic questions, as well as hand to hand." Jaune smiled at Ren. Nora flexed an arm, "Leave physical training to me! I'll whip you into shape in no time."

Jaune was at a loss for words. "You're going to let me stay with the team?"

Pyrrha smiled. "If you were the type seeking a free ride, and not willing to pull your weight, we'd be marching you down to Goodwitch's office at the end of a grenade launcher. But that's not the type of person you are. When you're not in the field, you are training, studying, researching, or otherwise improving yourself. You've hardly had a spare moment in the last few weeks, and you've already shown that you can contribute to the team in the field. You are also arguably farther along with your profession than any of us."

Ren spoke next, "Your tactics are sound as well, and quite inventive. You appear to be a quick study in those areas."

"Yeah, and your a good dancer, which is strangely a skill in demand in this guild." Nora added with a smile and a shrug.

Jaune laughed, "I can also play the guitar, and oh! I also give a great back rub, per my sisters at least."

The team stared at him. "Oh?" Pyrrha said with a raised eyebrow.

Jaune nervously scratched the back of his head, sensing his attempt at humor may have come off a bit strangely given the gravity of the conversation. "Ha, ah, yeah?"

"Looks like you'll have to defend your title as the best giver of back rubs in the guild, Ren." Nora said with a wink to her partner.
"I welcome the challenge." Ren's voice spoke of a confidence borne from years of pampering his friend and partner.

"Though, " Pyrrha said while refocusing on Jaune, "You will have to make up for your deception. There is a nice buffet in Vale I know Nora has had her eyes on."

Nora's eyes lit up, "You mean the all you can eat buffet?"

"That's the one." Pyrrha said with a smile, "Looks like you'll be treating us next weekend Jaune."

Jaune tried not to think of the hit to his pocketbook, though the funds from the missions would easily cover it. "Sounds like a plan."

"There are a few other tasks you can take on as well. The dorm room could use reorganizing" Ren gestured to the various odds and ends scattered about.

Jaune nodded, "I can talk to the Beacon quartermaster about getting some storage solution added to the room, or maybe work with Ruby for some chests and bags like what team RWBY uses."

Nora hit her palm with a fist as she spoke up, "Oh! And you still need to teach us how to play video games. Ren won't admit it, but he still gets confused by some of what Yang and Ruby say."

Jaune turned to Ren, who chose not to speak to his own defense. "Not a problem, as soon as we have some free time I'd be happy to run you through a few of my favorites."

Pyrrha checked the clock. "Still a bit of time left this evening if you don't mind starting your training, I know a great place we can practice."

Nora all but pushed him toward the door. "Get out there, Leader! Pyrrha, be sure to grind him into the ground, we'll forge him into a proper huntsman yet."

Pyrrha rose from the bed and took the lead. "Indeed we will. Come on Jaune, we've got a full plate tonight."

"But not as full as mine this weekend!" Nora called out with a smile.

Jaune smiled, a tear in his eye, he really did have the best team in Beacon.

"And also, " Pyrrha said, pausing at the door. "You better hope those back rubs are as good as you claimed." Pyrrha gave a pouty smile, "The life of a huntress is oh so stressful." Nora laughed at the comment.

Jaune sweatdropped, but at least here he was confident in his skills.

"I give you my word as an Arc."

"I look forward to it then. Now come on, let's see if we can do something about your footwork."

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Team RWBY was in their dorm, getting dressed in their uniforms after the morning's exercises.

"What's with JNPR as of late? The way they ran today, you'd think they were being chased by a herd of grimm or something." Weiss said, checking herself in the mirror.

"No idea, they have been like that the last two weeks. They even start without us now, doing almost a full circuit of the school before we arrive. If not for the threat of missing out on a pancake breakfast, Nora would probably still have them out there." Yang tapped her foot impatiently, "Can I turn around yet, Blake?"

"Almost done Yang. Maybe Nora is trying to work off said pancake breakfasts?"

Ruby shook her head, adjusting her hoods clasps. "Doubt it, that girl is a black hole food wise. Maybe her semblance converts sugar to energy or something?"

Yang raised an eyebrow, "Isn't that what eating does, like, normally?"

"Yang is technically correct there, Ruby." Satisfied with her appearance, Weiss moved to collect the texts she'd need for the day, placing them in her tote. "And for the record, I think her semblance turns electricity into strength. Came up during a inter-team spar last mission." Weiss had learned the hard way that lightning attacks are not wise to use on Nora.

"That's...pretty awesome actually, given her electric fields and such. You done yet Blake? This wall isn't all that interesting to look at, Achieve Men poster aside."

"I'm ready, you can turn around now."

Yang turned to face Blake, who had set up three identical corgi pillows on her bed. Weiss and Ruby focused on the display as well.

Yang closely examined the three, pausing before each as she examined them visually. Satisfied, Yang nodded and pointed at the one on the left. "Ok, it's that one."

Blake snapped her fingers, and the pillows on the left and right shattered like glass, leaving only the middle one behind. "Wrong again, that makes it three to ten, in my favor."

"Son of a...I thought I had it that time." Yang stopped a foot in frustration. "Your illusions are getting better every day." Blake smiled at the praise.

"You know, you every thought of trying an illusion on yourself?"

Blake paused, considering the idea. "No, can't say that I have. Worth investigating though, it's an intriguing prospect."

"Enough play, let's go eat already! All that exercise works up an appetite."

"Yeah yeah sis, lets go." Yang turned back to her partner as she followed Ruby out into the hall. "I'm so going to get the right one next time, just wait you."

"That's what you said yesterday." Blake responded with a smile.
Following the sisters exit, Blake hurried to collect her own school bag and join them. Weiss spoke up, her own book bag in hand.

"So how long do you think it will take her before she realizes the original pillow is still on Ruby's bed?" Weiss said, pointing to the aforementioned item.

Blake smiled pausing as she reached the door, "Is it now?"

"Oh you can't mean…"

Blake snapped again, the pillow on Ruby's bed shattering like glass.

Weiss's jaw fell. "When did you...how did you..."

"Lets go Weiss, our partners are waiting" Blake said, already in the hallway.

"Hey! Don't leave without me, we aren't through yet!"

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The day came and went, with the guild once again journeying into the forest for a mission and training.

"Lien for your thoughts?"

Pyrrha looked up from her seat on a fallen log, previously lost in thought. "Oh, hello again Ruby." Pyrrha gave her a wave and moved over to make room for her friend and guild leader. "I apologize for being a bit out of it, letting my mind wander a bit whilst taking a short breather. "

Ruby took a seat next Pyrrha. "Your mind go anywhere nice?"

Pyrrha smiled, shaking her head, 'Not really. I'm just thinking about how different it is to do a mission without relying on our professions abilities. It's like fighting with an arm tied behind your back, even more so than how it feels when we hold back in class. You see grimm and it's like your soul cries out to use all your power to destroy them. It's exhausting to deny it."

Ruby laughed, "That it is, that it is." Ruby took some cookies from the depths of her pack, taking one for herself and offering another to Pyrrha, who accepted it with a smile. "But it's important that we don't overly rely on our professions, especially when we have missions with folks not in the know."

"Such as with our upcoming class mission to Forever Fall. Nora's really excited about it, she's been spending a frightening amount of time with Professor Peach, and I do mean frightening." She shuddered when thinking of what those two could be getting up too.

Ruby giggled, "I'm sure they aren't up to no good. You know, Blake's been going on and on over Jaune's performance in Oobleck's class this morning. Apparently she's an aficionado of Faunus
Rights Rebellion era history."

Pyrrha laughed remembering Jaune's unexpectedly correct answers to Oobleck's questions, "I'll relay her praise to him, though I think her putting Cardin in his place was the real highlight of the class."

"The look on his face at her rebuff was great, but it was the look he got once Oobleck assigned that extra essay to him that took the cake." Ruby giggled some more, kicking her feet with joy, Pyrrha laughing right alongside her.

"How's your own training going? I've noticed JNPR really stepped it up as of late."

Ruby winced at the sudden somber expression on Pyrrha's face. "Training is mixed, but overall quite good. On the physical side things we are going pretty good. Nora has amped up our training in that area, revising our exercise regimen to push us all to a higher level. Individually it's more mixed. Jaune is, driven to say the least, more so than many I've seen. He's determined to better himself, no matter what it takes, and his profession is showing major results, though he's lagging behind a bit in terms of practical huntsman skills. He is working on that as well, and we've been putting in some extra hours of training together." Both huntresses were aware of his progress, his rapid gaining of levels of late spoke to it.

The two young women looked across the clearing, where Jaune was even now practicing his skills. Noticing their gaze, he sent the two a smile and a wave, which they happily returned.

"Nora is crafting up a storm working on, well, a lot of stuff, from robotics to chemistry. I'm not sure where her mind is taking her in her projects, but I am excited to see what comes of it."

Ruby nodded, munching on her snack. Nora was hyperactive, but her intelligence was undeniable at this point.

"Ren is doing well, he's got his stances down, but like myself, seems to be still searching for something. We've asked the professor if we can do some missions a bit eastward from here, where he feels the strongest draw inside him. She says it's on the schedule."

Pyrrha sighed, "I'm honestly not doing too well in this area, I've yet to unlock anything on the utility side of things, only varied attack skills. I suppose I just have yet to find that which drives them in some way." Pyrrha watched Ren and Nora, who were running through some routines along side Jaune. They appeared to be happily going about it, each working to refine their own skills.

Pyrrha sighed.

"It's frustrating, to be honest. I've spent many years training, studying, and fighting, but I've never faced anything like this. It's like there is a wall between it and myself, and I cannot find my way over, around or through it."

Ruby hmmed, considering the issue. She hated seeing any of her guildmates struggling, especially with an issue they only had to worry about due to her own actions. Her own team was two veterans in their profession and two others who were proving to be very quick studies. GLynda, as a professional huntress with decades of experience, was also proving to be an earnest student of her profession. JNPR was by comparison lagging farther behind, potentially creating problems. It was her duty as the guilds leader to find some sort of solution, or so she believed.

"It's hard to say what drives your professions, but I think maybe we can extrapolate from how we
know the others work. For example, "Ruby said, pointing to her own partner who was off practicing some fire attacks with Glynda. "Weiss is a wiz at dust, which helps a lot when understanding how her elemental attacks work, but it's her innate ability to multitask that really makes her profession shine. She once described it as splitting one's focus, channeling one element in one hand, and another in the other."

Ruby pointed to Blake, who was challenging Yang with swarms of clones in a chaotic looking spar. "Blake's new clones are similar to her old shadow clones but I think it's more her ability to think in terms of misdirection that's fueling her new abilities. She's doing great in terms of her new time magic as well, maybe it's related, you know 'time is an illusion' or whatever it is folks say? I was never good with time stuff, too confusing, heck I'd be late for class each day if Weiss wasn't making sure we all left on time each morning." Pyrrha laughed at that line of thought.

"Yang though, she's complex, fueled by both her rage and her thrill seeking attitude. The more damage she deals or takes, the stronger she becomes, but it's a double edged sword as that encourages recklessness and she does have a limit on just how much damage she can take. She does her best to manage it though."

"And what about you? You're easily the most powerful of any of us, what drives you?"

Ruby's smile faded some, melancholy showing on her face. "Sorrow."

"Sorrow? I apologize if the question brings up bad memories."

Ruby waved her hands, "No no, it's okay. My mom passed away when I was little, while out on a mission." Pyrrha sympathized, having lost her own father, "And it's when I think about that, about her, and the emotions it brings to mind that the power within me burns the brightest.." A green flame appeared in Ruby's hand, her eyes glowing softly. "But sorrow is a complicated thing. I know she is gone, but not lost, for death isn't the end, I just miss her. When I reach out to her, where she is, that place responds, and that power fuels my abilities. The more I embrace that feeling, and the more I strive to see both worlds for what they are, the more powerful I become."

Pyrrha watched the fire, and the smile on Ruby's face that slowly returned as the young huntress began to remember the joy she had when he mother was by her side. Ruby dismissed the flame and recomposed herself. "How about yourself? Feel anything funny or special?"

"Well " Pyrrha thought, considering Ruby's words, "I do feel a pull sometimes or rather a voice, like when I'm meditating, or when alone. It's like the more I shut out the noise of life, the clearer it becomes."

"Sounds to me like you need to find somewhere super quiet. I'm sure there is somewhere like that on campus, students like to study in quiet places after all. Maybe the professor can help?"

"Sounds reasonable to me." Pyrrha made a note to do just that following the day's mission.

"In the end, all I can really say is well, you know you better than anyone else. This whole thing is weird, but it has a logic to it, just find that, and I'd wager you'll find your missing skills."

"Sage advice from our lovely young reaper, exactly what the doctor ordered." Pyrrha said, smiling at Ruby.

"But of course!" Ruby said, thumping her chest, "I am your totally awesome guild leader. Now,
enough chit chat I think, we still have some time to train, and I think Jaune needs your help, Nora's getting a bit too enthusiastic with a few of her swings."

Pyrrha looked puzzled before turning her gaze back to her team, where Nora was chasing Jaune around with her hammer, sending clouds of dust and splinters into the air every time Jaune dodged a strike.

"Oh my, I should go help take the heat off him. Thanks for the chat Ruby." Pyrrha said, standing up and readying her weapon.

"Anytime!"

Pyrrha nodded, and than vanished, covering the distance to Nora with a shadowstep and intercepting a blow that would have clobbered Jaune. Ruby blinked a few times and stood up herself.

"Sure, she gets the cool teleporting strike thingy, while when I do it it's all blood and exploding undead worm monsters." Ruby threw up her arms at the cruel injustice of it, and walked back over to her team.

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Pyrrha made good on her mental note to bring the issue up with Glynda post mission, who lead her to a specialized room in Beacon's training wing.

"If it is solitude you request Ms Nikos, this is the best Beacon can offer."

Pyrrha ran her fingers across a large, flat oval shaped capsule. "What is this, Professor?"

"It's called an isolation tank. Inside it, you will be isolated from as much sensory input as can be managed. Beacon uses them to help certain students with semblance issues, as well as therapy and meditation. I was under the impression Sanctum also used these for similar purposes."

"Perhaps, but I never personally required their use, my semblance unlocked fairly early in my student career. I didn't pick up meditation until my arrival at Beacon and assignment to team JNPR."

Glynda nodded, well aware of Pyrrha's school record.

"So...how does it work?"

"It's quite simple really. You put in the earplugs, step inside, close the lid, and let your mind go where it goes. If you start to feel uncomfortable just exit the tank. Ether way, once finished just make use of the shower and supplied towels before you leave, it would not be wise to walk back to your dorm covered in salt."

Pyrrha felt the water inside the capsule. "I don't have a bathing suit with me."
"You won't need one." Pyrrha blushed at the idea, Glynda picking up on the discomfort. "Don't worry about being disturbed, the room locks from this side, and there are no cameras or other sensors in here."

Pyrrha nodded. "That's reassuring."

"I'll leave you to it then. Remember to lock up before you get started and be sure to set an alarm on the machine. It's not unusual for people to lose track of time in there, and you have class in the morning."

"I will, thank you professor."


"Goodnight, Professor."

Pyrrha locked the door after the professors exit and with a blush started to disrobe. She hung up her uniform and jewelry on some supplied hangers, and set an alarm for an hour on the capsules display.

"Here goes" Pyrrha said as she opened the capsule and stepped into the warm salty water, laying back and letting herself float for a few seconds before closing the lid and shutting out the world.

The effect was like nothing Pyrrha had ever experienced, like being alone in an absolute void. There was no light, no sound, even gravity's pull seemed to be absent. The sounds of thoughts in her head and the beating of her heart were amplified in the absence of all other stimulation. She thought back to Ruby's words earlier in the day, that she knew herself better than anyone else. She wasn't sure about that, but perhaps here she could find the answers to any questions she sought.

Pyrrha calmed herself and quieted her thoughts, as Ren had taught her. She wasn't sure who or what out there was trying to talk to her, or even if it was internal or external, but she was about as prepared to hear them as she could be.

She closed her eyes and spoke softly, "Alright whoever you are, let's chat."
Pyrrha Nikos had never felt so alone. Floating along in the darkness, she could hear nothing, see nothing, and for the most part even feel nothing external to herself. The effect was almost crushing at first, claustrophobia wasn't something she had experienced much of before but here it was unavoidable. There was also euphoria, the dulling of stimulation causing that which could feel to feel so much more vibrant, including her thoughts. As the minutes passed she grew more relaxed, her mind coming to terms with the lack of stimulation she was experiencing.

As much as she tried to focus on listening for any internal voice, Pyrrha couldn't stop her mind from wandering. She thought of her team, back in the dorm cleaning up after a good days practice and mission, working on their own projects or assignments for class. She herself had a lot to do after her current task was done, though she was confident she could complete it in time for a good night's rest. She started thinking of the next days schedule and what training she wanted to work with Jaune on next, and the bright smile he gained when a move finally clicked before shaking her head, water splashing around and causing her to bump into the capsules sides. She wasn't here to think of such things, she was here to make contact. The water calmed after a minute, and Pyrrha refocused her concentration.

She turned her focus inward, hoping to amplify the voice of whatever was reaching out to her. After a few minutes, Pyrrha at last was able to discern two very faint words.

'Reach out'.

"Reach out?" Pyrrha thought to herself, "reach with what?".

'Reach out' the voice repeated. Pyrrha contemplated the request. It was unlikely an internal voice would be talking about her hands, she reasoned, which meant it was asking her to reach out with something inside herself.

"Aura is a projection of the soul, maybe that would work?" Pyrrha concentrated, her black tinted aura projecting around her form, not that she could see it in the darkness. This had an effect, the voice was louder, more defined, and clearly that of a woman.

'Excellent. Now focus on your gift.'

"My gift…" Pyrrha had an epiphany. "Of course! This is about my profession, so it stands to reason something about it would be the key." Pyrrha concentrated, remembering the feel of her her new skills effects on her attacks, her movements, and how it felt when she shadowstepped.

Pyrrha's aura subtly shifted, and her awareness expanded. Despite the darkness, Pyrrha found that she could see. It was not just the inside of the isolation tank that was now visible to her, but the room around it as well.

"What…what is this?" Pyrrha marveled at her new awareness, noting it was the same with her eyes open or closed.

"That, young one, is the sight without sight."
"It's…incredible!" She couldn't resist waving her hands around in the dark, her fingers as now visible to her in the dark as they were in bright daylight. It was not the same as seeing her surrounding with her eyes however, this new awareness enveloped in a fog of sorts. Pyrrha could make out a great deal in the room, to various degrees of clarity.

"I is a gift of the mists, but one you are already familiar with in a way. You do not rely solely on your sight to overcome your foes, after all."

"Situational awareness is the key to victory", Pyrrha said, recalling a lesson long ago instilled in her from her time at Sanctum. Every sense added to the picture, and it was follow to ignore them in a fight.

"Your victories are well known, champion, your star burns bright. Is fame what you seek with your skills? Do you wield your power in the pursuit of fortune?"

"No!" Pyrrha shouted, her vision distorting. Quickly she calmed herself, refocusing on the voice one more and reaching out with her new sight. "Sorry, but no."

"Oh? Is not fortune and fame that which many people aspire to?"

"But it comes at too high a price. Sure, it's nice to have money, and fame can be fun at times but you get placed on a pedestal, alienated from others. You find yourself the object of worship for some, while others fear getting too close to you, feeling unworthy. Worse yet, you draw the attention of those that seek to exploit you for their own ends." Pyrrha had run ins with all of those above, for good and ill. Fans were nice, but not the same as friends. As for the scammers, con artists and related, well, she'd often found herself wishing she was dealing with them in the arena. There at least she could give their offers a proper response.

"So for what end do you hope to wield your power?"

"I seek to wield it in service to others, against the creature of grimm and for justice's sake. To safeguard those who cannot defend themselves." Such was the duty of a huntress, in Pyrrha opinion.

"Would you seek to beat back the chaos and darkness alone? You could be revered as a legend in your own time"

"I'd be lying if I said I didn't want to be known as a great huntress, to be remembered as such once i'm gone." Pyrrha thought about her next words for while. "But I don't think one person alone could achieve such a victory over the foes we face, even the heroes of old had comrades at their side, armies even."

"Are you not powerful though? Is your shield not broad and your spear sharp?"

"No one is an island. A person who is strong alone is stronger together with others." Another lesson the instructors had drilled into her. Sadly, her meteoric rise to fame had caused many to doubt the wisdom of their instructors, attempting to replicate her exploits. More than a few had walked away such folly bruised in both body and ego.

"Will you stand only for a chosen kingdom?"
Pyrrha shook her head, "Mistral may be my homeland, but I will go where I am needed, now and always".

"So which aspect of you is the real one? Your true face?"

Pyrrha thought about it. What made her, what her? She couldn't deny her fame, her skills, her newfound power, her team, everything contributed to what made her, well her.

"They all are. We are a sum of all our parts, for better or worse. I cannot deny any part of myself without denying the whole. No matter how painful some of those parts may be, or how joyous, they are a part of what defines me as an individual"

The voice was silent for a time, but soon spoke again. "You and I have much in common, Herald."

Pyrrha was about to ask for clarification before she was overcome with a vision. Before her was a large, faceted crystal. As Pyrrha gazed at it, she saw in each face an moving image. A young warrior clad in white and gold armor, spear and shield raised, foes laying defeated before her.

"My skills won me renown, praise, and the burden of command. Yet it was not adoration that drove me, but duty"

Another facet showed the woman surrounded by comrades, training them, leading them into battle.

"My comrades were the source of my strength, for a Sunspear does not fight alone."

Another facet, another vision, this time of the woman tormented, her face bandaged and her sight taken from her.

"I was robbed of my vision, but gifted with sight. My body wracked, but given strength. By soul flayed, but given hope. My ego bruised, yet I remained resolute"

Another facet showed her leading comrades though the darkness to face some unseen, but terrible foe.

"The darkness invaded and we invaded it, my comrades and I carried the light with us and brunt it away, and a great gift was realized."

Pyrrha was in awe at what she was seeing. It was like watching a thousand movies playing about a life, all at the same time, and all so clear.

"Just as all these define me, so to do they define you. Our hearts are one in the same."

Suddenly, the woman appeared before Pyrrha. Her armor shone brightly, even in this strange new vision of Pyrrha's. It looked just as it had in the crystal's recollection, covering much of her form save for glimpses of her dark and weathered skin. Her eyes were covered in by her helm, but Pyrrha had no doubt that she could see Pyrrha clear as day. She was stoic, beautiful and radiated strength and awe.

The woman held the crystal in her hands, offering it to Pyrrha. "Take it Herald." With only a moment's hesitation, Pyrrha reached out with her hands, and to her amazement, grasped it.

And in the crystals facets, she beheld a chronicle of her own life, from her first unsteady steps
toward becoming a huntress in her youth, to her rise in fame as she skills grew and her victories accumulated. She saw herself chose to leave it behind, to start anew in Beacon. Pyrrha saw her initiation, the meeting with Jaune in the locker room, rescuing him from the tree, their fight alongside the others versus the grimm and their empowerment. These, and a thousand other memories danced before her.

Pyrrha tore her eyes from the crystal and looked at the mysterious woman before hr. "For me?"

"Yes Herald. Take this and walk the path you have chosen for yourself, and do your duty to yourself and your comrades. I ask you now to channel my strength along side your own, now and forever shall we be comrades. Others will join you in time, as your skills grow and your destiny guilds you. Will you enter into this covenant with me?"

Pyrrha spoke without hesitation, "Yes, together may we hold back the darkness with our shields, and burn it away with our weapons."

The woman smiled, "Then so shall it be."

The crystal shattered, the shards absorbing into Pyrrha. Her UI flashed with the acquisition of new skills, at last filling in the blanks she had been so desperate to unlock.

The woman started to fade, before Pyrrha called out.

"Wait! I never introduced myself, where are my manners. My name is Pyrrha Nikos, student huntress of Beacon and member of Team JNPR. It is a pleasure to meet you."


"Hello!" Pyrrha replied with a smile.

"Till we meet again, Pyrrha."

"I look forward to it, Kormir."

The woman faded into mist, and Pyrrha eyes snapped open to the sound of the capsules light returning, and her preset alarm going off. She opened the tank with a touch and pulled herself into a seating position, reacquainting herself with the feel of gravity and the sensations of the outside world.

With unsteady feet she climbed out of the capsule, brushing some stray hair out of her face. She had came looking for answered, and by the gods did she find them. She examined her UI, noting she had unlocked multiple skills, Facets as they were called. Light, Darkness, Strength, Elements and Chaos, all tied to a new icon, which identified itself as the "Legendary Spearmarshal Stance" and one beside that was labeled as the Facet of Nature.

Pyrrha couldn't stop herself from jumping for joy. She considered writing a guild message to inform them of the good news but decided against it, this was the sort of thing best relayed face to face. She resolved to inform them as soon as possible, she couldn't wait to see the look on their faces.

Pyrrha was across the room and hand on the doorknob before remembering her current state of
affairs, that is nude and dripping wet.

"Well, maybe they can wait a few minutes.." she said to herself with a blush, turning toward the shower and prepared towels. A few minutes later, she was bathed, dried, and and moved to her hanging uniform, and noticed a chest was waiting for her beside them. She opened it, and from within pulled out a set of weapons. The shield was taller than he usual one, elongated like an pointed oval and decorated with iconography Pyrrha recognized from the crystal vision as eight pointed emblem of the Sunspear order. The shield mecha shifted like Jaune's into a smaller, easier to handle version. There was also a sword, which easily and smoothly shifted into a rifle and a spear like her own Miló. It also was adorned with Sunspear iconography and matched the art style of the shield. They were identified by her UI as the "Resolution" and the sword as "Duty."

Pyrrha quickly got dressed, storing her new arms in her pack and raced back to her dorm. Her team needed to hear all about this.

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The tree exploded into splinters from the force of the ursa major flying though it, the grimm coming to rest a short distance later in a slide. Any chance of the beast recovering was dashed a second later by means of a yellow and red arcing fireball known to her friends as Yang Xiao Long. Yang smashed into the Ursa's groin with a punch fueled by the full power of her berserk rage, the impact sending shock waves through the ground and annihilating the last bit of the grimms HP and dignity.

Yang casually wiped off her hands and dusted off her jacket. "And that's how it's done, ladies." Ruby clapped at her sisters finisher, while Blake and Weiss deadpanned.

"You're not going to dance now, are you?" Weiss said, clearly looking to move on.

"You're no fun, you know that Weiss?" Yang said, though her tone indicated she was less than serious about the comment.

"I'm plenty fun! It's just we're wasting time if we do it after ever elite kill, we should save it for champions, you know, keep it special." That was Weiss's story and she was sticking to it.

The others considered this. Sure, the fight with the elite ursa majors had been a challenge, but perhaps there was some merit to Weiss's suggestion. Or at least they'd fake it or now, Weiss toe tapping and hurried expression spoiling the mood..

"Alright alright, let's loot and move on. " Ruby said, moving to collect her drops.

Yang rolled her shoulder, "Man these elimination mission are fun, but kind of tiring."

"Technically it's a grimm population survey and reduction mission, but I agree. It's nice to cut loose and not worry about meeting a set objective." Blake said, before taking the time to recite and recharge a few of her mantras.

"Don't the sensors already, you know, do that? Keep track of the grimm I mean."
"They do Yang, but with all the sensor failures and strange readings as of late, proper surveys are needed to confirm sensor readouts. Better safe than sorry."

"Good point Blake."

Weiss, pleased to be moving on, was already marking down the fights grimm casualties and location. "Per the mission parameters, we should start heading in the general direction of the guild meetup now. It's going to take a while to reach, especially if we run into anything else."

"Sounds good to me. Loot and scoot it is, team RWBY!" Ruby threw up a hand as she holstered her weapon. Nods all around, the huntresses collected their loot and resumed formation.

"That was some nice earth magic back there Weiss, grimm never knew what hit it."

"Why thank you Blake, that was some nice...whatever the heck you did. The grimm looked like it was walking through mud in terms of reaction times."

"It was a Well of Action, according to my UI. This time magic stuff is quite useful, once you get the hang of it." The horology books she had been reading were giving her some solid ideas on how to work with her new skills.

"I wonder if we could combine chronomancy effects with some of my quickness or perception glyphs, may make some interesting combos." Weiss's mind was already considering the possibilities.

"Worth investigating, we'll see what we can mix up during guild training time." Weiss and Blake motioned the affirmative, and continued scanning for threats.

"This sector, grimm aside, is kind of pretty. Lots of ruins around here, makes me wonder what all this was back in the day." Yang said as the team passed what looked like old, broken foundations.

Blake took a closer look as they passed. "The style is similar to the cliff side ruins, I wonder if they are related."

"Didn't Doctor Oobleck mention something about this the other day? Like it was some sort of abandoned sector of the old Vale kingdom?"

Weiss's ponytail bounced as she nodded, "He did indeed Ruby. In fact, we've a field trip to a related site in the syllabus for later in the semester."

"I'm down for field work, beats sitting in a lecture hall all day." Everyone agreed with Yang on that front.

"Speaking of which, everything set for Forever Fall?"

"Yep! I've got it all sorted out Yang, we should be good to go. Interested to see what drops there." Ruby was always looking to add something new to her collection.

"I wouldn't count on getting anything, after all we're not expecting heavy combat."

"Be optimistic, Blake!"
"Only you would consider the possibility of combat against deadly grimm to be a good thing."

Ruby pouted, "That's so untrue! Yang looks forward to clobbering grimm more than I do."

"She's got a point there, Blake."

The team giggled. Life was quite interesting for a guild huntress it seemed.

Their revelry was interrupted by a new message in guild chat.

[Glynda: This is the regularly scheduled status check.]

[Ruby: RWBY here, no major issues, mission is proceeding normally.]

[Jaune: JNPR here, well, it's proceeding. We did run into something interesting, and then something incredible. We'll give you the full details when we see you, it's something better seen in person than explained via text. On the bright side, we know how Ren's profession works.]

[Glynda: Will there be any problems going forward?]  

[Jaune: Depends on how you all react to the mechanic in question.]

[Glynda: Understood, be prepared to explain once you arrive at the rendezvous.]

[Jaune: Roger that.]

Team RWBY stared at each other. "I wonder what he's going on about?"

"Well Yang, it can't be any worse than Ruby's minions, can it?" Blake said to her partner.

Weiss was pale in the face, well, paler than normal. "Oh gods please tell me it can't be."

Ruby patted her partner on the back. "Nah, ain't nothing worse than my babies. Anyways, let's get a move on, I'm dying to see what's got JNPR in a tizzie."

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Some time before JNPR's check in, Team JNPR was hard at work on their mission. Or more accurately, Pyrrha and Nora were showing off their new skills and toys, annihilating grimm and taking names while Jaune and Ren did their best to support them.

The current target of the teams gleeful slaughter was a sizeable nevermore. Said nevermore was currently coming at them with barrage of feathers on a low altitude attack run. Rather than the team scattering for cover, Jaune summoned up a large dome shaped magical shield around his team, which destroyed the feathers on contact.

"Now Pyrrha!" Jaune said, leveling his shield above his head as Ren fired a burst at the
Nevermore, the grimm reeling back in pain from the barrage.

Pyrrha took a running leap, stepping off Jaune's shield like a launch pad, her sword shifting into javelin mode mid leap. Clearly not expecting it's prey to meet it in the air, the grimm was caught off guard as Pyrrha closed the distance, thrusting her javelin into its chest, the nevermore seizing in midair in pain and dropping to the ground. A scant second before it hit Pyrrha shadowstepped to safety, the nevermore's impact throwing up a plume of dust.

Before the anguished beast could recover, it was intercepted by a small, vaguely fish shaped rotor powered flying robot. The bot deployed razor sharp and dust hardened blades, whirling around in a deadly cyclone which tore into the nevermore in a shower of ichor and feathers. It's job done, the bot whirled one final time to rid itself of any stuck on blood before stowing it's blades and hovering back to Nora's side.

Task completed, the team exchanged a few high fives before going to loot the carcass, or at least what was left of it.

"Great job everyone, I think that's the last of them." Jaune said, scanning the nearby woods for any additional threats, and nodding satisfactory at the lack thereof.

"Your gyros are really something Nora." Ren said, observing the aforementioned gryo as it mecha shifted back into storage mod, Nora stowing it in a holster attached the inside of her overcoat. Nora's Gyros were a wonder of craftsmanship and utility. Deployed, they resembled rotor equip puffer fish, each designed with a different core function or weapon. They could also shift into a form that was easy to store for later use. Nora had certainly made great use of the parts Ozpin had acquired for her, or so Ren believed. He'd get no arguments from the rest of the guild on that matter.

"Thanks Ren! This field test is going a lot smoother than expected. So far, the blast and shredder gyros have performed beyond my expectations. Than again, I am awesome, so maybe they are at expectations? What do you think Ren?" Nora rambled, turning to her partner for his judgement.

"Be proud, they and you are indeed awesome."

"Speaking of awesome, Looks like your new skills are working out as well Pyrrha."

Pyrrha nodded, checking her drops and quickly stowing them in her pack. "Thank you! I'm still getting the hang of them, they seem to have passive and active effects. Learning which to use when will take some time. It's like I'm channeling the Spearmarshal's powers, it's an interesting feeling. They are both my skills, and hers."

Jaune patted his partner on the back, earning a smile from Pyrrha. "I'm sure you'll have it mastered in no time." Jaune said, as the party resumed their east ward journey. "How close would you say we are to this calling of your Ren?"

"Very. Probably less than a hundred meters to where it's coming from, I think." It was hard to accurately judge the distance to gut feeling after all.

"Alright, everyone be on your guard, we don't know what to expect and the grimm presence around here has been strangely high."

Agreement all around, they readied their weapons as they covered the last bit of ground, Ren
leading the way with Pyrrha close behind, Jaune and Nora taking the rear.

"Right around here...quick, take cover!" Ren said, the team quickly obeying. He looked around the tree him and Pyrrha had covered behind and into the clearing ahead, which was surrounding some old ruins.

"What is it?" Nora said, unable to get a solid look herself from her own vantage point.

"Looks like more nevermore, juvenile ones, maybe a meter to meter and a half wingspan." Pyrrha said, shifting her weapon to rifle mode. She was confident she could pick a few of them off before they raised an alarm.

"Wait...something is different with these. Their nameplates are green...not red like normal." Ren said, rubbing his eyes.

Jaune was confused, " Is that possible? I mean, normally we only see that with people, and non hostile ones at that."

Pyrrha confirmed, "I see the same. I'm not sure what to make of this."

"You sure this is the place Ren?" Nora said, grenade launcher at the read and a Blast gyro hovering nearby, ready to attack a target once designated with it's internally stowed cache of bomblets.

"I'm sure of it." Ren took a solid look around, checking for other threats. "I think I know what to do. Get ready to cover me if i'm wrong, but hold fire until I give the signal"

"What's the plan?" Jaune said, mentally preparing an offensive mantra.

"This." Ren said, as he slowly broke cover and walked toward the closest Nevermore, weapons ready but not firing, semblance notably inactive.

Pyrrha, Jaune and Nora changed positions, fingers on triggers and spells, in disbelief at the audacity of Ren's action.

Ren slowly approached his target, which turned to face him in curiosity, but otherwise made no movements indicating hostility. Ren was well aware of how dangerous even a small grimm could be, but trusted his instincts here. He holstered one of his weapons, and reached out toward the grimm with one of his hands, the other firmly gripping a readied machine pistol.

Every heart on team JNPR skipped a beat as Ren's hand came into contact, Ren himself freezing. For a moment the team was unsure what to do, their stomachs in ropes and beads of sweat on their brows.

The nevermore's eyes changed, going from haunting red to emerald green, and it perched itself on Ren's shoulder. Ren walked backward toward his team, careful to keep an eye on the nevermore still perched on the ruins.

At last he entered the treeline, and allowed himself to take a breath. "Well, glad to see that decision panned out."

Nora was at his side in an instant. "Ren, what were you thinking?" She pointed to the grimm, still perched on Ren's shoulder, it's eyes darting around at his team with curious glances. "And what's
with that?"

"Well, turns out my instincts were right. Let me explain…"

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The guild had assembled at a small ruined town square a short distance from Team JNPR's last position. The guild stood and sat in a semi circle, both keeping watch for any unwanted guests of the grimm variety, as well as keeping a sharp eye on Team JNPR's newest member, also known as a nevermore.

Despite their keen focus on the nevermore, there was little in the way of freaking out or controversy. Instead the assembled students and teacher were exhibiting more a cautious curiosity to the matter.

"I have to admit, I expected this to go a bit...well...worse." Ren said, nevermore still perched on his shoulder. "Especially given Weiss's reaction to Ruby's minions."

Weiss sighed, "While I've not seen a situation exactly like this, I'm not unfamiliar with grimm that have been in some way tamed. My family's semblance allows us to summon defeated adversaries as minions, including grimm. I regularly fought against said summoned grimm while training as a huntress student." Winter had summoned up everything under the sun during their training sessions, though real grimm were far more vicious and didn't stop when commanded.

"What? That's awesome! I've never seen you use that though, you holding back on me partner?" Ruby said, suddenly in Weiss's personal space.

Weiss gently pushed Ruby back a bit, gaining room to breath. "Sadly, my skill at such summoning is currently inadequate. I'm working on it, though training in my Weaving has been cutting into said practice." Weiss redirected the focus back onto Ren, "But enough about me, how exactly did you pull this off?"

"It would seem to be a profession function of the Soulbeast." Ren began, removing the grimm from his shoulder and placing it on the broken wall next to him. "Our UI flagged a group of them as non hostile, and I felt this urge from within to reach out and touch one. Once I touched it, it was flagged as friendly, and all sorts of new skills related to the direction and use of the grimm appeared. I've not had a chance to experiment or try most of it out yet, however, but I suspect as the bond between it and I grows, I'll have access to even more related skills pertaining to its use."

"Use of the grimm? Like you can command it?" Yang said, eyebrow raised.

"Indeed I can, observe." Ren pointed to a nearby rock, and the nevermore immediately flew off, pelting the rock with a barrage of feathers before returning to Ren's side. It looked to Ren for praise, and received a pat on the head for it's demonstration.

"Oh my gods sis, do you know what this means?" Ruby said, jumping up and down. "It means Ren is a.."
"He's a pet class. In other words, one that uses the abilities of a command-able minion to supplement their offensive and defensive abilities."

Everyone turned to Glynda, who was still rubbing her temples at the implication of this newest addition.

Ruby's mouth was open, words taking a minute to return to her. "That's...that's right! Do you play role playing video games, Glynda?"

Glynda ignored Ruby's minor breach of decorum by referring to her by her first name and replied, "I've not the time for such things in quite some time, but in my youth, I did partake in certain activities that familiarized me with the terminology and use."

"Wait, you were a pen and paper gamer? No wonder you've been able to adapt to all functions of your profession so quickly. We are so joining your next campaign." Yang said matter of factually. Yang wasn't much for that sort of game, but this was a possibility too good to pass up.

Glynda sighed, "I'll not be running one anytime soon, if ever Ms. Xiao Long. And as Ms. Schnee said, let's keep our focus on the matter at hand." Glynda turned to Ren, "While your new 'pet' will most certainly add to your utility if our theory is correct, it does create one obvious problem."

Ren nodded, seeing where this was going, "I can't exactly walk around Beacon with it, not without inviting a great many questions i've not got answers to. However, I think I have a solution."

"Oh?"

"There is a section of my ui that deals with pet organization and storage. Here, i'll show you"

The guild watched as the grimm faded into nothingness with a shimmer of green light. A few seconds later it reappeared in an identical shimmer.

"It would appear that it can be dismissed and resummoned at will. I suspect that if I obtain others, I can cycle through them at will. I've no idea where it actually goes when dismissed, however."

Nora spoke up "Hey Ruby, maybe it goes to the same place as your horrible thingies do?"

"I don't think grimm come from the underworld...or do they?" Ruby turned to Glynda seeking confirmation. Glynda shrugged.

"Though grimm have been observed spawning from blackish pools, it's not known where they are before that, if they exist at all. Few who have investigated the pools have lived to tell the tale, and no one has survived entering one."

"I hope they aren't in the underworld, we have enough of them to deal with while living, I don't want to deal with them while I'm dead as well." Everyone nodded in agreement with Yang.

"I wonder if you could tame and store other things, like animals. Not sure how useful most of them would be in our line of work though."

"I suppose that's worth investigating Blake, though I'm not sure we're allowed animal pets at Beacon."
Jaune laughed, "I'm pretty sure we are even less allowed to have Grimm in Beacon. It's kind of the opposite of what we are going for at least." The joke earned a laugh from the rest of the guild.

Ren smiled, observing his new 'pet', "though it does present an interesting academic situation. A controllable Grimm who doesn't suffer from the normal effects of Grimm captivity would allow for up close and detailed study of Grimm physiology, attacks, maneuverability and agility, and related".

Glynda's interest was peaked by that idea, "That's an intriguing point Mr. Ren, and one that deserves more investigation. I'd like you and Team JNPR to carefully monitor and record any data you glean from your new pet, for the lack of a better term. I'll speak with the headmaster about this, perhaps we can find a plausible cover to disseminate anything you learn. Do you feel a 'calling' anywhere else? It could lead to another group of passive Grimm."

Ren shook his head, "Sadly no. This may be a one time helping hand from whatever designed this system, a way of moving my profession along. I suspect any additional groups may have to be located the old fashioned way."

"So if anyone finds one, speak up in guild chat so Ren here can head that way and tame it." The guild affirmed Ruby's order. There was no telling when or if they would come across any more, but it was worth keeping an eye out for.

"Anyone else have a question or concern?" Ren said, eager to get on with practice.

"Just one, " Blake said, "What are you going to name it?"

The guild oohed at the question.

"Hey, that's a good point Blake!" Nora turned to her partner, "So Ren, what's that terrible critter's name?"

Ren thought for a moment, before coming up with something he thought would be fitting. "Xianniang, or Xian for short. After someone I knew growing up."

"I suppose there is a story behind that one."

"There is Blake, but that's for another time." Ren stood up, Xian taking its place on his shoulder once again. "But I'm sure most of you are looking forward to practice, so let's not delay. I know Pyrrha and Nora are also looking forward to showing off their new skills."

That earned nods of agreement all around, and soon the guild organized up into various practice groups. Ruby tapped Jaune's shoulder for attention, and with a promise to Pyrrha to catch up with her in a minute, he turned to face Ruby.

"Well Jaune, I owe you an apology."

Jaune was confused, "I can't imagine what for, Ruby."

"Remember back in Ozpin's office when we first pitched all this" Ruby said, motioning around with a hand. Jaune nodded. "You asked if our practice could have passive Grimm, which I told you didn't exist. As of
today, I stand corrected."

Jaune raised his hands in mock cheer, "Sweet, sweet vindication! Though I wish more were like Xian over there, and less like, you know, every other grimm on Remnant."

Ruby laughed, "We'll take what we can get. Though speaking of the headmaster, you still on the hook for being his goofer?"

"Don't remind me, I'm headed there after the mission in fact."

"Well, I'll not keep you then Jaune. Plus, I think Pyrrha is starting to give me strange look" Said huntress was smiling at Ruby and waving. Well, at least that's how Jaune saw it, Ruby noted Pyrrha's eyes were a bit too sharp, and her smile a bit too wide. 'Maybe it's just the lighting'? Ruby thought.

Jaune waved back to his partner, "She looks normal to me. Reminds me though, you can probably expect a sparring request today. Pyrrha's keen to see how her new skills work in a spar, and well, you are the strongest of us in terms of profession.."

A bit of color drained from Ruby's face at the thought. 'This is going to hurt'.

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Ozpin's personal study was a mixture of library, office, workshop and everything in between. Few students ever visited the place, and fewer still would recognize the wealth of artifacts, knowledge, and relics it contained. Shelves of books sat next to modern computers and displays. Machinery and devices both ancient and state of the art sat on workbenches and tables, while several works of art hung on the walls, many by revered masters.

There was also a multitude of storage drawers, filled with specimens, ingredients, and all manner of other items, ripe for study or stored for later use. Many were locked to prevent access to anyone who happened to steal into Ozpin's sanctum with nefarious intent.

Currently the headmaster was hard at work with what appeared to be an elaborate chemistry set, several samples of grimm material before him and a copy of Ruby's note on potion formulation. He was trying to create the same alchemical results that the guild was producing, with various degrees of success. He had turned to the pursuit to take his mind off his search for the huntress Ruby had spoken of, the one who had unlocked her new powers. Said search was not going as well as he had hopped.

Jaune was on a ladder, searching for a particular book ozpin thought would help Ozpin with his latest experiment. "Lets see, Grayson...Grayson..Ah, here it is, Grayson's Alchemy, 6th edition." Jaune retrieved the tome and quickly descended, placing the requested book on Ozpin's workstation.

"Here you go sir, need anything else?"

"Not at the moment, go ahead and take a break. I may need another soon though, depending on the
outcome of this formulation."

"Alright, I'll be right over here when you need me."

With a nod from Ozpin Jaune retired to a nearby desk, and resumed his own reading. Ozpin noted the content with a glance.

"Interesting choice of reading materials Mr Arc, I wouldn't have figured you for a art history fan.

Jaune looked at the cover, "It that what this is? I chose it because the cover art looked interesting, and the illustrations inside were pretty cool. It's all in old script though, I can't actually read it."

Ozpin laughed while cross referencing something in the new tome. "There are few who can these days, as Dr. Oobleck would decry. He's pushed to add it to the curriculum, but I doubt the students would have the time to spend a few hundred hours on the pursuit." Ozpin, mixed a vial into another, taking a second to waft the scent. The smell of fresh cinnamon filled his nostrils, and he nodded with satisfaction.

"I dunno, i'm on a bit of a history kick as of late, might be worth looking up the basics. There is a lot of interesting stuff in those old history books." Jaune was thankful however his own summoned tomes were in modern script.

"Beacon's library collection has a few texts that may help you along that route if interested. I'm sure the good doctor would refer you to more still."

"I'll see if I can pencil in the time. Though no promises, it's tight as is." Between schoolwork, practice, and missions, Jaune was rather swamped.

The two entered a comfortable silence as Ozpin worked and Jaune read. This was broken a few minutes later as Jaune shot to his feet in surprise.

"Hey headmaster, you should take a look at this."

"Something catch your eye Mr. Arc?"

"That and more sir, take a look."

Jaune walked over to the headmaster, the art book opened to a particular illustration.

Ozpin spared the page a glance, "Ah yes, I know this story. It tells of a man who was charged with creating votive statues for his faith. You would know his works by sight, they are the winged statues of a woman you see in many temples. Very few are original, most are reproductions or inspired by his original work."

Ozpin resumed his work "If you are interested in learning more, I can loan you a few books written in the modern vernacular on the subject."

"Cool, though that's not what caught interests me so much." Jaune pointed to the next to the sculptor. "Take a close look at her."

Ozpin sighed and took another look. The woman appeared to be a huntress, or was otherwise armed and armored. Tall and slender yet radiating strength, much like many huntresses of the current age.
She was exquisitely beautiful as well. "It's not uncommon for an artist to use a physical model as a basis, what of her?"

"She's got the same staff as the woman in Ruby's slides."

Ozpin's heart skipped a beat, and he quickly and carefully set down his work and picked up a magnifying glass, examining the picture closer. "You are absolutely correct, Mr Arc, the staff is identical, it appears Ms Rose's drawing was worth far more than originally thought."

"So who is the woman then? Anyone important?"

Ozpin read the text below. "According to this, she was a huntress who so captivated him with her beauty and sense of purpose that he declared her the very visage of divinity itself, and used her as a model for his famous votive works."

Jaune nodded along, mentally filing away the information. "Does the book record her name?"

Ozpin quickly scanned the next few pages, at last located a reproduction of a charcoal drawing of the model's face in greater detail. To their luck, it was displayed next to a snippet of the artist's personal journal. "Yes, it does. According to his journal entry about his meeting with her, her name was…." Ozpin trailed off in shock.

"Was what, headmaster?" Jaune was on the edge of his seat in anticipation.

Ozpin looked up from the book, locking eyes with Jaune as he spoke. 'At last, a potential lead.' he thought, hiding his elation with trained ease.

"Her name was Dwayna."
"Did I hear you correctly, headmaster?" Jaune said, disbelief written on his face, "The model's name was Dwayna?"

Ozpin slumped back in his seat, the art history book still in hand. "Indeed I did Mr. Arc. It would appear that our intriguing model not only shares a weapon with the woman of Ms. Rose's past, but also her name."

Jaune was ecstatic, throwing his hands in the air, "That's amazing, oh man Ruby is going to freak out when she hears this! I mean this is huge, like super huge!" Jaune paused in his revelry, "But wait, isn't that book rather old? I mean it is in old script after all"

Ozpin turned to the front, noting the publication date. "According to this, the book was published over a hundred and seventy years ago. The journal it's quoting from is older still, the original event taking place some two hundred years ago."

Jaune's shoulders slumped, "I guess that counts out her being the same woman than Maybe the name and weapon were handed down? I mean, Old weapons are not that uncommon in huntsman use, my own sword dates from the great war after all." Maintained well, huntsman quality weapons remained a viable tool for many decades, or so his father had impressed upon him growing up.

Ozpin tapped the cover, his mind already turning with possibilities. "That is a line of inquiry worth pursuing, and an astute observation, Mr Arc." Ozpin took a sip of coffee and continued. "We may be able to work from the genealogical and historical records of that age forward, searching for references to the model and what became of her."

Ozpin had been working with the assumption both the huntress and her weapon were recent, and finding little to nothing. Taiyang and Qrow had hit similar dead ends in their own searches, from what he had been told. Granted, many were born and weapons forged outside the kingdoms, records could be sparse. But If he could narrow down a general area with the assumption that the name and weapon were heirloom, than he could better target his searches.

"So find what happened to the model, and from there, maybe find out who she could have passed the name and staff down to. What about that journal? If the artist, er, what was his name exactly?"
Jaune felt it odd to keep calling him 'the artist'

"Kaspar"

Jaune nodded, "If this Kaspar guy was as smitten with her as it seems, he had to have written more about her. Heck, I'd wager he made other art with her apart from the statues."

Ozpin nodded with a laugh, "Sound reasoning, Mr Arc, on both points. Sadly, this text only deals with the one event, and doesn't quote more of the artists personal journal outside of it. He was well known in his time, so it is possible the journal was copied or the original stored for historical sake. After all, the text was able to quote it. If ether still exists, they may be found in the artists home kingdom's care."

"So where was he from? Maybe we could track down a copy or something."
"He was from Mistral." Ozpin looked almost nostalgic as he thought about the kingdom. "It was as much a center of art and culture back then as it is today. The kingdom's central library may have a copy, we could request an inter kingdom transfer to Beacon's own. Such a request may take some time and attract attention if we are not careful. I'll handle the matter personally." Ozpin was not looking forward to the paperwork or expenses involved, but the value of the knowledge within could be invaluable.

"His art however, we may be able to track some of that down outside Mistral. It was traded far and wide, after all, and widely copied." While the journal was their best bet, if the artist had chronicled other encounters with her it was worth pursuing. The image in the text was a wood print recreation of his original sketches so an original could reveal additional details about Dwayna, her origins, or related. Ozpin's mind was already hard at work spinning a cover story for this interest in art and history.

"Sounds like a plan to me, where do we start?" Jaune rubbed his hands, eager to get started.

Ozpin smiled at his enthusiasm. "There is little we can do this evening, Mr. Arc. The hour is late and you have schoolwork to attend to." "Jaune winced at the motion of schoolwork, he had a report to finish prior to the Forever Fall mission. "I'll contact you and Ms. Rose as soon as I have anything."

Jaune nodded, and gathered his things. He paused when he saw the book. "Oh yeah, mind if I grab a few pictures of the book? I doubt you'd let me take the original, and I want to show the others what we found."

"By all means, Mr Arc. Do let me know Ms. Rose's thoughts on the matter." Ozpin handed Jaune the book, already open to the correct pages. Jaune quickly snapped a few pictures with his scroll.

"Alright then, have a good evening sir."

"You as well Mr Arc." Ozpin set about making a new pot of coffee as Jaune turned to leave. Gazing at the bookshelves around him, and the terminal before him, Ozpin knew he was in for a long night. He was excited however, a new chapter had quite literally opened up in his new favorite mystery.

"At last, a lead." Ozpin thought to himself as he set to work.

Ruby was a regular ball of excitement in the days that followed Jaune and Ozpin's discovery. Dwayna this and Dwayna that was all Ruby would talk about, much to the chagrin of her teammates and friends. Ozpin had yet to uncover anything of major note, leaving Ruby's mood only slightly dampened.

Currently team RWBY was in the dorm, double checking their supplies for the days trip.

"Gah! It's been days, how can he not have anything yet? I mean, come on!" Ruby pouted while packing some snacks into her bag. "I mean, he's got all those resources and can't find out more information about super awesome model from 200 years ago? What's next, losing the recipe for
Yang smirked at her sister's antics, she was so cute when frustrated. "Now that would be a tragedy. And as i've been saying since this morning, settle down sis. The records from that age are spotty at best, it's going to take some time. Still, we are closer now than we were before."

Blake tossed in her two lien while selecting a few potions from the guilds collection, settling on some anti-mammal and anti-avian grimm potions. "While I share Ruby's enthusiasm for answers, we should all temper our expectations. Tracing the path a weapon and name took over centuries, and from human to Faunus at that, is a time consuming enterprise"

Weiss nodded in agreement, while filling the guilds canteens with summoned water. Refreshing, and restorative, she wondered if there was a market for it. "I'm with Blake here,. we should table to matter for now, as we have some more pressing concerns, mainly today's class mission. Team JNPR will be here any minute for the guild meeting."

A knock at the dorm rooms door came a moment later.

[Jaune: It's us.]

Yang, after a quick check to make sure everyone was ready for company, opened the door to find the expected faces of their sister team. JNPR were clad in their newly crafted armor sets, save for Pyrrha who had decided to go with her black PVP reward gear. Yang nodded in approval at their craftsmanship, with Jaune having far better coverage than his standard gear, and Ren and Nora looking keen in their long coats. They appeared to have also brought their day packs along, clearly intending to leave straight from RWBY's dorm when the time came. Yang motioned for them to come inside.

"Hello again!" Greeted Pyrrha with a smile. Others followed suit with their own greetings, which were returned by team RWBY.

"Hello folks, were just talking about you. Well, you and you know who." Yang stood aside as team JNPR piled in, taking a seat wherever they could. Everyone knew about the model and Ruby's newfound obsession with her. No one could blame their guild leader for it however, all equally fascinated and intrigued by the story.

"No Glynda today I see?" Said Jaune, taking a seat next to Blake on her bed, followed shortly by Pyrrha.

"She'll be remoting in. People have started to notice the professor is spending a bit too much time with us." Advisor or not, it was unusual for students and faculty to intermingle in a student's dorm. The guild drifted into chit chat as they waited for Glynda to message them that she was ready for the meeting, running a bit behind schedule preparing for the class activity.

A few minutes later, Glynda was connected via a relay from Ruby's scroll, with Ruby and Jaune taking their places for the days briefing.

"Alright Roses, we'll make this short, as we need to head down to the lockers soon to arm up before the mission. The topic of the day is Forever Fall, our first class mission. Now we Roses are no stranger to running missions, but today's is going to be a bit different than what we are used to running.
Jaune spoke up, "Since our classmates will be present during this operation, we are going to have to take additional precautions."

Glynda took that as her cue, "Our rules of engagement for today will differ from your previous missions. Unless absolutely dire circumstances arise, please refrain from using magic or related professional skills or at least none that can't pass for regular huntsmen abilities or semblance. The last thing we want is for the likes of say, team CNDL to see our skills, and have to extend membership to the guild to keep their mouths shut." Everyone present winced at the idea of that happening.

"So that means Jaune's 'semblance' and Nora's skills are okay?" Ren said with a raised hand.

"Correct o mungo, Ren." Ruby said while giving a thumbs up. "That's already a known thing, so no one will suspect anything out of the ordinary. Likewise, some of Yang's will be permitted as well, given how her profession works. While we are not expecting a large number of grimm, encounters are pretty much to be assured. As for the objective, I leave that to Nora. Take it away!"

Nora was positively giddy as the guild turned to face her, "So today we will be gathering some sap from the trees in the area, a useful and tasty substance. Officially, this is at the request of Professor Peach, but we have our own interest in it as well. More specifically, me, as I'm needing some for my own project. As a result, I'll need you all to gather a few extra jars."

Weiss raised her hand, "How many is a few extra?"

"Three more per person."

"Quite the increase, won't people notice all the extra we are gathering and ask questions?"

It was Ruby who answered, "Shouldn't be a problem. Once we land at the staging area, the teams are going to scatter across the area, and should be too busy with their own tasks to keep a close eye on our jar counts. Furthermore, its usefulness is well known, so swiping a few more shouldn't raise suspicion. If anyone asks, we tell them the truth: it's for a teammates project. That or her breakfast."

"A vital part of any balanced breakfast." Nora added with a smile.

"So get some sap, bash a few grimm, all on the down low." Blake said while counting on her fingers. "Sounds fun."

Weiss sighed, "If facing down grimm to gather breakfast components is what you consider fun at least." Weiss not not surprised when her statement was met with a chorus of affirmations, laughs, and 'you know it's'. Weiss rubbed her temples, wondering not for the first time if magic was worth the insanity it came with.

"Alright than Roses, lets go arm up and get this show on the road!" A few cheers of agreement rose up from the guild, and they gathered their gear and headed to the lockers to pick up their weapons. Ruby had a good feeling about today as she watched them file out.
The Bullhead docks were humming with activity when the guild arrived for deployment. First year students milled around, double checking gear and chatting with friends and classmates. Upper year students watched them with a mix of amusement and nostalgia as they walked to their own transports or to their own lessons.

For many of the students, this was their first taste of outside the classroom activity since arriving Beacon, and perhaps, their first taste of combat since initiation. Excitement was in the air, and many seemed eager to get in the air and into action.

Teams JNPR and RWBY were the subject of many a stare and conversation as they waiting to board their transport. While some had seen the guild going to and from their missions in the Emerald Forest, for many it was their first time to see the guilds mission gear. They were both a curiosity, as well as a source of envy. Many students only had a single set of weapons and outfit, so the guilds alternative outfits and weapons were the subjects of conversation all around. A few students had approached with inquiries about procuring their own, only to walk away impressed that they were hand forged. At least officially, the true source of dropped or rewarded gear kept secret.

The green crystal armor and weapons drew the most inquiries. The substance was dubbed Ambrite after the discovery that it was in fact a dust infused material based off tree resin from Emerald forest trees. Officially, it was something that Beacon had recently discovered and they were field testing it for effectiveness. There was truth in that story, as Ozpin had shown great interest in the substance and had been trying to reproduce it with various degrees of success.

Not everyone was happy to see the guild, who were busy doing final checks and reviewing maps on their scrolls, finalizing which areas they would focus the days effects on. Each team was suppose to pre-register their area, to allow for a rapid response should aid be required. Consumed in their task, they didn't notice the approach of another team.

"New duds, eh Arc? Got to say I'm impressed, great coverage, well detailed, primo stuff. Such a shame it's wasted on someone of your caliber."

"What do you want exactly?"

Cardin shrugged his shoulders in mock offense. "Can't a guy just talk with an old friend?"

"We aren't friends." Jaune's scorn was apparent in his tone.

"You wound me, Jaune. Just thought I'd see how the teachers pets are preparing for their big outing."

"We do this often, as I'm sure you're aware." Weiss crossed her arms. "I suppose your already geared to go, given you have time for such inane attempts at bravado."

Cardin sneered at Weiss, "No one asked you, ice princess." He smiled, "But yeah, the guys and I are all set for an enjoyable little excursion."

"Well if you'd excuse us then, we have some final touches before we go." Jaune returned to his scroll, no longer wishing to play along with Cardin's little game.
"Such a rush? Not like a bunch of bookworms to leave things for the last minute. Too busy chasing coattails to properly prepaid, eh?"

"Our victories are our own, Winchester." Blake said, trying to will Cardin away with her glare, "Glynda doesn't babysit us in missions, we are quite capable of killing Grimm on our own."

"First name basis with Goodwitch I see? Not the only teacher you lot have been sucking up to. As for handling the Grimm? I can blondie or invincible girl taking one out, but Jaune here? Hah, probably pisses himself at the site of an Ursa."

"I've killed a few of those you know, getting quite good at it in fact." Jaune looked up from his map, "Remind me how many you've killed since initiation?"

Cardin snickered, "I'll believe it when I see it, Jaune."

"I'd be happy to prove it," Jaune smirked, "but let's hope it doesn't come to that."

"For your sake let's hope it doesn't." Cardin sneered. "Your shiny new gear and semblance aren't any match for actual skill. If it was, you might actually win a fight in class." In truth Jaune had won a few matches when fighting in pairs, victories his detractors attributed solely to his partner.

"A true huntsman doesn't have to demean others to stroke their own ego." Pyrrha voice was cold, her scorn obvious to all listening.

"Pfft, a true man doesn't have to hide behind a dress." Cardin said, eyes fixed to Jaune.

"Pyrrha is my partner, Cardin." Jaune said, not even bothering to look up from his task. "You'd be wise to not to insult her in my presence." Pyrrha smiled at Jaune's words.

"Oh I'm not insulting her, Arc. Just you."

Jaune nodded at the gears status. And moved to show the checklist to Ruby, who tore her eyes from the scene before her to check. Jaune spared Cardin a dismissing glance. "Are we quite finished?"

"Was getting bored anyways. Have fun today, Jaune. I know we will." Cardin motioned to his team. "Come on, let's ditch these losers."

Team CDRL walked away sharing a laugh. The guild watched them go, thankful the encounter had at last ended.

"Quite the ego for someone who's lost to most of us present. No offense Jaune." Said Blake, shaking her head.

"None taken."

Yang pointed a thumb toward Cardin as she addressed Jaune. "Is he always such an ass to you?"

"Language, Yang" Ruby said admonishing her sister. Yang mouthed sorry in return.

"He's been like this ever since he found out about my semblance. Looks like he's resorting to insults if he can't get physical. Between our missions with Glynda and improvement a in class, He's
reacting ever more antagonistically." Every correct answer or praise from a teacher had caused Cardin and his team to ratchet up their insults. It didn't matter if Jaune or someone else from their guild had answered, all were a source of frustration and anger.

"He's not taking it out on just Jaune ether, his bullying in general is getting worse. We saw him push that faunus girl into a locker the other day." Ruby noted with scorn. If Ruby was mad about the event, Blake was livid at the memory.

"Attacking others to vent their own inadequacies," Weiss said, "how disgraceful."

"Don't let it get to you, Jaune. Cardin's just a jerk." Nora's eyes widened, "We should break his legs. Can we break his legs Ren?" Ren Shook his head.

Jaune sighed, "It doesn't, don't worry. I've seven sisters, it's not the first time someone has insulted me for being surrounded by women, many of whom were superior in one way or another. Big sisters are often a defensive lot toward their younger siblings, it earned me more than a few detractors."

Yang put an arm around Ruby, "Gotta look out for ones siblings after all."

Pyrrha patted Jaune on the back. "You're twice the leader he is Jaune."

"And twice as good with the ladies." Jaune responded with a wink. His friends stared at him blankly, save for Pyrrha who blushed.

Blake was the first to break the awkward silence. "You know he's probably right, I mean this is Cardin we are talking about"

"Jaune does give a great back rub " Pyrrha said, a smile on her face at the mention of it, already looking forward to the next one.

Ruby raised an eyebrow. "Really now?"

"Really."

"Good cook as well." His breakfast was good, though Nora believed Ren's was better.

"He also plays guitar." Ren's comment earned a thumbs up from Jaune.

Yang rested her hands on her hips, giving Jaune a wink. "Maybe you are a catch then, lover boy."

"Really?"

"Don't let it go to your head."

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The flight from Beacon to Forever Fall was brief, most students spent the time looking out the
windows out at the Vale commercial district. It was a reminded of what they were training to protect, and how close danger was to the city below. The landing zone was only a few kilometers from the city walls, in an area near the mountain foothills.

The bullheads surveyed the area with a series of low passes, checking for any obvious signs of grimm activity. Satisfied the area was clear, the transports landed and the students disembarked, immediately taking up defensive positions as they wanted for the supplies to be offloaded.

For most it was their first trip into the forest. Beautiful wouldn't begin to describe it, it was an endless sea of red, orange and yellow, a place where autumn's colors shown year round. Many were as enraptured with the beautiful vistas as they were the possibilities of combat. Grimm were about, even if the landing zone was clear. The students were more eager to get their hands dirty as they were to fill Professor Peaches order for tree sap.

The Roses were eager as well, both to see what Nora's project would yield, as well as the possibility of new drops, new herbs and related. Ruby was already thinking of reasons to have training missions in this place.

Jars distributed, Glynda ran though the mission requirements, and dismissed the students to proceed with their assignments. Glynda gave her guild mates a nod and then focused on her tablet, monitoring the teams as they dispersed to their previously selected zones, as well as the sensor grid. She mentally prepared herself for any emergency, as fights were guaranteed and many of the students were quite green.

Teams RWBY and JNPR were in high spirits as they strapped on their jar filled packs and set off toward their objective area. The mission would, if all went well, only take a few hours, and the students would be back in time for dinner and evening activities.

"This place is just...wow. I mean, beautiful doesn't begin to describe it" Jaune was in awe at the scenery around him as the guild traveled forth.

Blake concurred with Jaune's assessment. "I've traveled though it, but never stopped to look at it. It is indeed quite exquisite." She paused a moment to kneel down and collect some fragrant wild herbs.

A few minutes later they arrived in a densely wooded area at the base of a small foothill. Checking their maps, they confirmed the coordinates and lay down their packs.

"Alright, this is the spot." Ruby said as she checked her scroll. "Nearest teams should be teams Carmel and Topaz, about 200 meters that way. So talk softly folks, but otherwise we should be okay."

Jaune nodded, "alright then, we got a lot of jars to fill so we better get started. Remember to watch your backs as we work in case any grimm show up, and keep an eye out for any more herbs or wild plants of interest. I know Nora and Blake have been itching to get their hands on some fresh ones."

"Good for making potions, enchanting, and tasty late night snacks."

"Your kidding, right Blake? I mean on the last one."

"Do I look like I'm kidding, Weiss?"
The snacks had been tasty, but Weiss couldn't shake the fear that Blake was secretly experimenting on her teammates. She shook the image out of her head. "Lets just get on with this. The sooner we are done the better."

Ruby zipped to Weiss, putting her arm around her partner's shoulder. "Where is your sense of adventure, Weiss? A new area means new potential gear! Oh, what i'd give for a herd of rampaging beowolves to farm"

Weiss removed Ruby's arm, "We aren't supposed to use you know what today, so let's lay off the desire for large scale slaughter and think more along the lines of large scale sap harvest."

Ruby stuck out her tongue, but complied. The teams quickly got to work tapping trees, and starting to fill their jars with the sought after sugary sap. While three members of each team were filling, the forth was serving as a lookout, with the teams rotating who was on lockout so everyone would have a chance to reach their quota.

Despite Ruby's desire for drops, the day was proceeding rather quietly. There were some sounds of distant weapons fire, and the roar of a passing train some kilometers away, but otherwise the grove was filled with the sounds of laughter and idle chatter as they went along with work.

As each group of trees were tapped out, the teams shifted to another set. The harvest was bountiful and the guild was able to fill most of the jars in short order. As they worked to fill the last few jars, Blake suddenly snapped to attention, it being her turn at lookout. The movement didn't go unnoticed.

"What is it Blake?" Jaune asked, hand already on his hilt.

"I think I hear something coming from the hill."

"Grimm?"

"No, it sounds like voices."

"Voices? No other groups should be that close. Any of the voices sound familiar?" Jaune listened, but couldn't hear anything beside the endless rustling of leaves.

"It sounds like…" Blake's eyes narrowed, as she drew her blade, "Winchester."

At that moment Team CDRL rose from their prone position, hurling jars of sap down toward teams JNPR and RWBY.

"Oh crap, look out!" Jaune yelled out the warning with only seconds to spare. Jaune blocked one of the jars with his shield, causing sap to spatter on his armor. Blake was able to shoot one out of the air, the sap falling well short of the group.

One went high, shattering on a branch while the other came close to Pyrrha, who was able to dodge out of the way due to Jaune's warning.

"Oh really freaking funny, Cardin." Jaune tried to shake some of the sap off his gear, only seeming to smear it more. "Anyone else hit?" Ren, Pyrrha and Nora shook their heads, all in the clear.

Blake checked her own team, her ribbon flattening and her eyes going wide. "I think we have a
Team CDRL was all laughs at the groups misery. "That was just the warm up Jaune my boy, the real hilarity starts now!" Cardin highlighted his point by tossing the cardboard box, which split open on impact freeing a swarm of angry insects.

Ren recognized the bugs on sight "Rapier wasps!" The wasps made a beeline toward the guild.

Blake took a few steps back, pointing at something, "Ru-Ruby, I think we need your help here."

"What's so important" Ruby went silent as she noticed the source of Blake's distress.

"Damn! Nora, Weiss, can you take those out!?"

"On it" Nora shouldered her grenade launcher, arcing a volley of ice grenades into the swarm, which burst in air and froze a great many of them.

Seeing her opportunity, Weiss summoned up a fire rune, which loosed a torrent of flame at the swarm, incinerating those that Nora had missed. The battle, if it could be called that, was over in seconds.

Pyrrha glared at Team CDRL, "That was incredible reckless. Rapier wasp stings are agonizing, what if someone had gotten hurt?"

"What's the matter, not as invincible as the rumors say?"

"Ah Jaune..." Ruby tugged on Jaune's arm, ignoring the sap which got on her fingers.

"What's up Ruby" Jaune's eyes were shifting between his partner and Cardin, hoping the situation didn't escalate.

"If Cardin was after violence, I think he found it." Ruby's next move was to turn Jaune's head to face the location the fourth bottle had been targeting. His response was quite apt.

"Oh. Well shit." That got the attention of the rest of the guild, who turned to see what was causing such a commotion.

The bottle in question had shattered on a low hanging branch, it's contents spilling forth and covering a small area. An area that was occupied by one Yang Xiao Long, a huntress who's hair was now covered in red sticky sap. Yang said nothing as she stood, running a hand through her hair and observing the sap which coated it. Dropping her own jar and tap on the ground unceremoniously, she walked toward the hill, eyes cast down and body noticeable trembling. As she walked, her breathing became ragged, and the leaves beneath her feet started to combust.

"Yang, it's okay, calm down, I'm sure it will wash out." Ruby frantically searched for a way to calm her sister down. "Just take a deep breath, and remember what we aren't supposed to show today."

"You...you' Came her mumbled reply. Jaune and JNPR kept their distance, choosing self preservation and giving Yang a clear path.

Yang's gauntlets shifted into combat mode, and flamed started to lick the air around her.
"Sis please, listen to me, calm down!" Ruby held her sister by the shoulders, "Glynda will have your butt if you show off you know what, especially against another student!" The mental image of an angry Goodwitch did cause Yang to pause. The consequences would be dire indeed.

Ruby took a breath, believing that she may have gotten the situation under control, so long as CDRL didn't dig themselves a deeper hole.

"What's the matter Blondie," came the voice of one Sky Lark, "bad hair day?" CDRL broke into laughter at the joke.

Everything went silent, birds fleeing from the trees and small animals running for cover. Ruby and the guild could only stand slack jawed in disbelief.

"The Idiots." Blake said, scarcely believe what she had head. "The absolute, mindless idiots."

Yang's trembling returned in force, her teeth grinding and the heat that surrounded her growing in intensity.

"Oh screw it, " Ruby dashed for cover near her partner as Yang resumed her advance.

Yang stopped at the base of the hill. CDRL's laughter died down as they finally realized what they had done.

Yang slowly raised her head to face them, eyes burning a brilliant crimson and the look of pure unadulterated rage coloring her face. Two words spilled forth from Yang with all the fury of a thunderclap.

"YOU ASSHOLES!"

They all watched in horror as Yang became an inferno.
Fights were a common sight in the world of huntsmen and huntresses. One could say that the history of ones training in the occupation was an endless series of them in fact. It was though fights with their peers that one learned the trade. It was by watching fights that one picked up new techniques and styles. In turn, their skills would be turned against the grimm, the fruits of the labors manifesting in the always welcome sight of a slain creature of grimm. Huntsmen fights had poise, grace, discipline. They were often a popular thing to watch, a grand display of tactics and skill.

Truly, Ruby and the rest of the guild had seen fights. But this? This wasn't going to be a fight. Or even a brawl, a throw down, or a kerfuffle.

No, the guild felt they were about to see something else entirely this day.

They just hoped it wasn't a murder.

Ruby and the others clung to their cover as a wall of heated air crashed over them, radiating out from Yang like the sun in July. Team CDRL felt it to, their mockery dying on their lips as the air echoed with Yang's curses.

Never one to let common sense get in the way of bravado, Cardin searched for a suitable way to save face, considering himself unafraid of the mere anger of a woman. Yet another of his mistakes that day..

Cardin's mouth had barely opened before being greeted by Yang's fist, the huntress having used her gauntlets to rocket her way up to CDRL's position. The blow sent him flipping heels over head, taking out a good chunk of his aura as he crashed to the ground a short distance later.

The rest of team CDRL stared at their laid out leader. Their gaze then turned to Yang, who met theirs with glowing red eyes, her first still hanging in the air. Her eyes promised torment and suffering to all who would face her wrath.

Flight or fight instincts battled for control of their psyches, and the three remaining members of team CDRL scrambled for their weapons, hoping to turn the tide to their favor, or at least, hold back the storm.

This was the latest in their long line of poor decisions this day.

Having previously bore witness to an infuriated Yang, the result of a alpha beowulf the family had nicknamed 'the poor bastard' and it's crime of damaging Yang's precious mane, Ruby knew what was in store for team CDRL. She knew she had to act, as a proper team leader would. Or at least, as one trying to save her own skin would.

"We have to stop Yang!" Ruby cried out, determination in her voice.

"Do we really? I mean she looks like she has this handled." Blake was normally opposed to excessive violence, but felt it might be appropriate here, and well, it was a bit of payback by proxy.
Ruby pointed at the disturbance in disbelief and urgency, "How can you say that?! She just hit Sky Lark with Russel Thrush!" Yang at that moment had the aforementioned poor lad by the ankles, swinging him around like some sort of screaming club. His teammates didn't quite know how to handle it, alternating between dodges and whispers of apologies while parrying with their weapons.

Blake crossed her arms. "I'm not seeing a problem here. They brought this on themselves, and escalated it beyond the point of no return. I say we let her blow off some steam, and maybe they will think twice before doing this sort of thing to another team."

Weiss eyes were locked on the battle, well, the beat down to be more precise. "Their aura is really starting to drop ladies, I'm not sure how long they'll have." Despite years of training, it was difficult for Weiss to describe just what she was seeing. Well, not using language suited for a lady of her statue.

Ruby took Blake by the shoulders, silver eyes meeting yellow. "I don't deny that those idiots are responsible for this but it's us I'm worried about here." Ruby pointed at her sister, "Yang may be holding back now, but sooner or later she's going to slip up and do something we can't easily explain. And when that happens, we'll have to do the unthinkable."

"What...what would that be?"

"We'll have to invite them to the guild." It took a great deal of effort to spit out those foul words. And that's saying something considering Ruby was no stranger to abominations and acts some may term 'defiling the dead'. Blake was taken back by the suggestion, but Ruby pressed on. "It's the only way to ensure their silence and compliance, Glynda said so herself."

Weiss put her arms around Blake. Yang had her hands on Dove's throat.

"Imagine what they would do with such a thing. How many students do you think they could bully? How large will their egos get with the influx of power?" Blake recalled their bullying of the faunus Velvet and others, and CDRLs endless antagonism in general. Despite their middle of the road performance, the team already had huge egos, adding magic to the mix would inflate them to airship proportions.

"Just think of it. Inviting them to our room for meetings, having them sit on our beds. Spending long hours on missions together, training together. They may even want to hang out."

Yang laid Dove out with a vicious right hook. The air was filled with the sounds of crazed laughter and screams. Mostly CDRLS, but one could hear a few of Yang's as well.

Seeing where Weiss was going with this, Ruby continued. "All the while sending us messages in chat, spamming about this or that inane subject. Faunus bad this, and machismo nonsense that. At all hours of the day." Ruby had found that Blake responded quite well as of late to clock metaphors.

Weiss moved in close to Bakes ear, going for the kill. "Is that want you want, Blake?"

Cardin wanted Yang to stop punching him in the Winchester family jewels. He would be disappointed.

Blake's face went white while she considered the scenario, helped along by Cardin's screams. The
idea of having to spend anymore time with those ruffians than required was something she found herself dreading. She could picture it all clearly now, each scene that flashed before her eyes making bile rise and her body shudder with despair. Despair, then grimm resolution colored her face.

"We have to stop Yang!" Blake shouted, hands on her weapon and determination on her face.

As if endorsing this noble endeavor to not have to spend time with team CDRL, a new meta event popped up.

'Stop the berserk huntress before her cover is blown.' It even included a handle Rage-o-meter that was slowly filling up as CDRL's aura fell. Convenient, or so Ruby thought

"See! The system agrees!" Ruby said, a smile at her face. One driven more by the cosmic agreement with her task, not so much the task itself. She wasn't looking forward to that part. She turned to her sister team and guild mates.

"JNPR, you ready?"

JNPR beheld the carnage on display. Yang was a fiery semblance fueled whirlwind of hate and pain, single minded focused on tormenting her adversaries. Jaune was in awe at the pure, unreasoning violence on display. It was like that time his eldest sister had borrowed without asking one of his other sister's dresses for a date. Except with more blood and cries of pain.

Pyrrha had a hand over her mouth, wincing at the sounds of torment and anguish being inflicted. Never in her years of tournament fighting had seen such wanton disregard for another well being. And Pyrrha had bore witness to many a dirty fighter over the years, but this? This was just excessive.

Ren contemplated the curses Yang was shouting in tongues not heard by mortal men in an age. He'd have to look up the meaning of a few of them, they were quite creative though.

Nora didn't know legs could bend that way, and made a note to try that on the next grimm she fought.

They stood as much to lose from Yang going out of control as RWBY did. Collectively they swallowed hard.

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Yang's rampage was interrupted by the appearance of the largest Ursa Major Yang had ever seen. And she'd seen her share of them. Team CDRL stared at the beast in shock, finding themselves between a rock and a hard place.

The Ursa Major, a champion, sniffed the air, its focus falling on Yang and the sweet smelling sap upon her. CDRL let out a breath, willing to take any help they could get if it got Yang off their backs long enough to regroup. They had fought against her before, but her performance today was far more savage and painful, then what she displayed in class. It was akin to a cat playing with a
doomed mouse, save for the cat was on fire and had shotguns. Dove would later recall that they had an faunas upperclassmen that also fit that description.

The Ursa Major was between Yang and her prey, something Yang couldn't tolerate. As the beast lunged at her, she brushed it aside with a backhanded blow, sending it tumbling down the hill toward the onlookers below. She turned her attention back to her own prey, who were staring at the tumbling Ursa in disbelief. It just wasn't there day it seemed.

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JNPR knew what they had to do, for the good of the guild.

The meta event added a objective to defeat the champion Ursa Major as it crashed into the trees nearby and came to a stop.

Yes, Team JNPR knew what must be done.

"Dibs on the Ursa! Let's go JNPR!" Jaune shouted, rallying his team for the coming fight.

With a chorus of good lucky and 'break a legs', which Ruby hope was said ironically, JNPR moved into position to engage the champion.

Blake watched them go, cursing the fact she was always late calling dibs. She turned to Ruby. "Looks like we are on our own, any ideas?"

"Your asking me? She's your partner!"

"She's your sister!" Blake shouted back in disbelief.

"Actually, I have an idea." Weiss said, drawing her teammates attention. Both turned to face their white haired teammate.

"Do tell" came Blake's reply. Ruby and Blake huddled with their teammate as Weiss detailed her strategy.

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Glynda nodded with satisfaction as she passed a team hard at work filling their quota and gossiping among themselves about her guild mate's attire and weapons. She was pleased that she overheard nothing that would raise a red flag, but made a note to review any previously agreed upon cover stories with the guild once they returned from the days activities.
Glynda than returned her focus to her tablet scroll which showed some unusual activity in several of the area sensors, which were sadly few and far between in this section of the forest. She wasn't too concerned with the students safety, as few grimm would be a serious threat against dozens of well armed student huntsman and huntresses.

A sudden flight of birds caught her attention, the beasts fleeing from some unseen foe on the far side of the mission area. A quick check at the deployment map told her teams RWBY and JNPR were assigned to that section.

[Glynda: I see activity in your area, is everything under control? Do you need any assistance?]

[Ruby: Well we do have a bit of a situation. Champion Ursa Major on scene, and something more concerning.]

Glynda began walking toward team RWBY and Team JNPR's positions at a good pace. While she believed they could handle it, the guild had yet to fight a champion sans professional abilities, and thus backup could be quite welcome.

[Glynda: en-route to your position. What is your second concern?]

[Weiss: Team CDRL is here, they pulled a prank on us.]

Glynda frowned, CDRL was suppose to be in another section altogether per the deployment registration. 'What on Remnant could be more concerning than a champion grimm?'

[Glynda: Are you worried about unsanctioned discovery? You have trained for this sort of thing.]

[Weiss: We aren't worry about CDRL, we are worried for them. They threw a jar of sap at Yang, her hair is covered in the stuff. She's...not taking it well.]

Glynda considered this development for a few seconds and reacted accordingly. That is to say, she broke into a run.

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Team JNPR took up positions in a semi-circle around the grimm, with Jaune and Pyrrha at the center and Nora and Ren taking each flank. Nora had deployed her gyros, waiting for an opportune order to strike.

The Grimm recovered from it's tumble in short order, and roared at JNPR as it became aware of them. The grimm sniffed the air, and smelling a familiar scent, focused its attention on the source.

"I think it likes you, Jaune." Pyrrha said, noticing it's target.

"Great." came Jaune's deadpan response. He took a few steps back, and watched as the grimm followed, the grimm clearly disinterested in his teammates. The others moved to encircle it.
"Guess I'm bait then." Jaune gulped at the thought, well aware of the risk. "Alright folks, let's do this by the book. Check your fire and go for the kill or the hobble if you can't get a clear shot."

They nodded their affirmations and with practiced ease opened fire.

Yang's vision was red. She'd been angry before, but this, this was unlike anything she'd felt before. Rage boiled up from deep inside, and every fiber of her being demanded retribution for the slight against her. They had dared, the fiends, to defile her hair. They had joked about it, took delight in it. No punishment was too great for such insult.

Punishment, the word gave her pause as she ducked a counterattack, following up with one of her own. She could be punished, couldn't she? 'Yes', part of her cried out, 'The Goodwitch would punish her if she wasn't careful.' It was fear of this punishment that caused her to hold back, to pull her punches.

But with every blow that landed, and every second that passed by, she found herself becoming less and less concerned with it.

Weiss, Ruby and Blake ran up the hill toward the sounds of Yang's rampage.

"This better work!" Blake was not happy to helping team CDRL. Yang owed her big time for this.

"Don't worry, It will! At least I think it will, it will work, right Weiss?" Ruby said to her partner.

"If you have a better idea I'd love to hear it."

"Nope, you Blake?"

"Nadda"

"Then I guess we go with it." Weiss said as they crested the hill. CDRL had rallied, and were attempting to gang up on Yang with little success. Yang was a master infighter, and had experience taking on multiple assailants. CDRL couldn't coordinate well enough to exploit the gaps in her defenses. They found themselves literally stepping on each others toes.

"Now!" Blake threw Ruby her weapon, the ribbon binding the two huntresses together. On cue, Weiss accelerated Blake with a glyph as Ruby activated her semblance. They caught up to Yang in a heartbeat, ensnaring her with the ribbon and immobilizing her for a precious few seconds.

Yang was caught off guard, and struggled against the bounds. Weiss leaped onto her back, removed her canteen, and proceeded to dump it's contents over Yang's head.

Ruby, Weiss, and Blake Froze. CDRL stared in disbelief. Even Yang seemed to pause, trying to come to terms with what just happened.

Now she was wet and her mind, clouded by rage as it was, was trying to come to terms with that. It didn't take her long to respond.

Yang screamed as steam rose from her form, heated by her fiery semblance., and threw Weiss off her back, the heiress landing with a smooth somersault. Yang dislodged the others with a spin the flung them away from her, Ruby and Blake quickly recovering after landing, with Blake recalling her weapon and ribbon. Despite their attack, Yang seemed disinterested in them and returned to her
assault on team CDRL, much to their chagrin.

Despite being thrown off, Weiss smiled as she observed Yang's status. The water had done its job, a good bit of the sap had been washed off, and the rage-o-meter had fallen. She had known that summoned water had healing and condition purging properties, and her little display had proven that it applied to previously stored water as well. It would take more than one canteen full to wash away the source of Yang’s fury however, and they had a very limited amount.

Still, it was progress. Eyes on the prize, she signaled her teammates for another pass, though they doubted Yang would be caught the same way twice.

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Forever fall was proving to be a more exciting mission than Nora could have hoped for. Not only was she scoring a lot of material for her pet projects, she was also enjoying some choice entertainment. Well, if you could call assaulting a champion grimm entertainment.

The Ursa's armored form had shrugged off JNPR's opening volley, forcing them to adapt on the fly. They hadn't been completely unsuccessful though, an acid round courtesy of Nora had blinded the beast, forcing it to hunt Jaune by smell and sound rather than by sight. They had capitalized on that, using party chat to coordinate their attacks to avoid revealing their positions.

The current strategy, if it could be called that, was to have Jaune lead the Ursa into whatever line of fire he could, trusting that his teammates would do their best not to hit him. Jaune to his credit was doing an excellent job, through an outside observer could mistake his movements for a panicked dash rather than a carefully coordinated series of faints, double backs, and ambushes.

Not for the first time today they cursed team CDRL, both for being the source of their current woes as well as preventing them from openly using their new skills. Jaune was hesitant to take blows from his aegis passive effects, which was limiting his options to dodging like a madman and trying to deflect what he could with his shield. Pyrrha and Ren could do little save relying on their passive effects and traditional huntsmen skill sets.

Thankfully Nora was under no such limitations, and was throwing out every trick she could summon up to chew away at the grimms hp pool. The very thing that had caused her grief, her lack of overt magic, was proving to be an absolute boon today. The anti-mammal grimm potions she had brewed up were adding weight and accuracy to their attacks, and her tools were allowing her to stay one step ahead of the grimm, setting up fields of lightning and barrages of explosives, chewing up the grimms HP pool with each pass. Spying an opportunity as Jaune raced toward her, Nora held her hammer at the ready and signaled to her team leader.

[Party: Nora: Jump! ]

Jaune didn't need to be told twice as he leaped over a rocket assisted swing from Nora's hammer aimed at the pursuing grimm's leg. The blow was sound, shattering some knee armor and tripping up the grimm. Nora did a quick about face, shifting back into launcher mode and nailing a forelimb with an ice grenade, freezing it to the ground.
The team wasted no time capitalizing on the grimm's condition. Ren was on it from the flank, sending well placed bursts of fire into gaps in the Ursa's flank armor. Jaune moved in close, deflecting an errant swipe of a clawed hand and countering with a slash to it's wrist. Pyrrha aimed to further hobble the beast, trusting a spear into its immobilized elbow joint from behind to great effect. A follow up shredder gyro finished the job, shredding the grimm's arm and drawing forth a wail of agony.

Tearing what was left of the limb free, the grimm resumed its attack. The limb now hung uselessly at the grimm's side, and a good chunk of health was gone, something that brought a smile to their faces. Their little war of attrition was working.

Activity in the guild chat caught the team's eye.

[Glynda: En-route at best speed, what's the situation?]

[Pyrrha: Making progress with the grimm].

[Blake: Ditto for Yang, but we could really use a distraction, she's proving hard to pin down]

[Ren: We have an idea, hold fast]

[Ruby: oh, we're holding alright']

The other members of JNPR were puzzled, wondering just what Ren had in mind.

[Party: Pyrrha: What's the Plan?]

[Party: Ren: Hey Nora, remember Initiation?]

A smile split Nora's face.

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Blake was never going to forgive her partner for this. Not only was she forced to defend team CDRL oh all things, Yang had taken to dodging their attempts to help her, reasoning that if her rampage was stopped than those who had so slighted her would be getting off without appropriate punishment. Master infighter that she was, this meant getting between her and the target of her wraith, without becoming a target themselves. Blake swore her partner had to have eyes in the back of her head, skillfully evading their attempts to restrain her time and time again. Yang, due to the missions the team had undertaken and hundreds of hours of sparring, knew their attacks by heart and how to defend against them.

While fortune favored the bold, they couldn't risk their limited supply of magical water, and thus had to pick their windows of opportunity carefully. CDRL, ever unaware of their own self preservation, often got in the way, seeing opening in Yang's defenses as windows for their own attacks.

Blake now understood why Weiss had headaches all the time. Weiss was doing her part with poise,
using ice and thunder glyphs to create separation where she could, with Ruby zipping around trying to trip her sister up. Yang’s solution to this interference was often to throw a member of Team CDRL in their path, reasoning though her anger that her teammates couldn't risk hurting them too much, else they would be doing Yang’s work for her and undoing their own progress.

If JNPR had a distraction in the works, Blake and the others hoped they would get to it already. As if on cue, a cry of ‘Choo choo!’ shattered the air around them, and the assembled huntsmen and huntresses turned to the source.

Blake had seen insane sights before, but this, this was one for the ages. The Ursa major, bloodied, battered, and wailing in pain crested the hill, heading right for the assembled melee. Nora sat on the Ursa's shoulders, hammer held before her over the grimm's head and Jaune dangling from the end. Jaune was holding on with one arm and frantically parrying the beast's swipes with his sword, serving as a living carrot on a stick. Ren and Pyrrha ran alongside, trying to keep up with the stumbling grimm and ready to strike as soon as the order was given.

The Ursa crashed through the melee like a living, wailing wedge and separated Yang from CDRL. Angered at being denied her object of wraith, Yang turned to the Grimm and readied to attack, eager to punish the interloper.

Seeing the doom that was coming Nora swung Jaune clear of the incoming Yang, and with a rocket powered kick of her boots, abandoned the grimm to it's fate. Noticing the smell of Yang's sap covered hair, the Ursa followed it's nose right into her attack.

Yang screamed as she wailed on the Ursa, easily ducking it's swipes and tearing off a chunk of it's health with devastating combinations. Seeing as Yang's focus was elsewhere, and not wanting to add a rampaging Ursa to their list of troubles for the day, CRDL wisely started to retreat, turning tail and running toward the hills slope to perceived safety.

As the grimm reeled from a particularly vicious right hook, Ruby saw an opportunity. She quickly used her semblance to tackle Yang with a rose powered sisterly rocket glomp. Wasting no time, Ruby dumped her own canteen over Yang's head, washing away more sap. Task accomplished she zipped away with a wink to Blake, signalling that the rest was up to her.

The Rage-o-meter was nearly empty now, and the Ursa major was well on its way to death. Before it could recover from Yangs blow JNPR had swarmed it with their own attacks, taking out it's other leg and at last crippling it. Nora was pleased to see that in fact, you could get a leg to bend that way.

Still it lashed out, eager to take one of the students with it should it go. With one final lunge it threw itself at the closest target it could sense, which unfortunately for it was Yang, recently recovered from Ruby's attack.

The result was like like a game of table tennis, with Yang smacking the Ursa Major backward into team JNPR, who blasted and pummeled it back to Yang. Bystanders watched, their eyes going back and forth along side the Ursa. It was as bizarre a sight as it was an entertaining one, Ruby was glad she had brought snacks, sharing some with an awestruck Weiss.

A few shotgun powered uppercuts later the grimm fell backward, laid out on it's back and fully exposed. Seeing as it was down for the count, JNPR put the beast out of its misery, grinding out it's last few HP and finishing it off with a clobbered head and swords run though it's torso.
Blake saw a window as Yang paused, enjoying the feeling of adrenaline that came after a solid grimm fight. Blake moved to restrain Yang only to have Yang snap around with a right straight, running too high to bother confirming her target before throwing the punch. Blake dodged it by a hair's breadth, Yang's gauntly taking off a few of her own hairs as it flew center line over her head.

Yang's eyes went wide and she froze, words starting to form on her surprised lips, Blake reacted first, taking Yang down by means of a quick hip throw. Straddling her partner's waist and lifted Yang's head by her jacket collar, Blake unceremoniously dumped her canteen over Yang's head. The fog of rage that had enveloped Yang vanished with the last of the sap from her hair. Blake let go, letting her partner's head fall to the ground with a gentle smack.

Yang lay there cold, sore, and at last calm. The first words out of her mouth were strange, at least to Blake.

'...Ears.'

"What about ears?" Blake said, still gasping for breath after the ordeal.

"Cute."

"Cute? What do you mean…cute".

It was at that time Blake realized her hearing sounded a bit off. She also noticed the bits of black ribbon floating down, torn free by Yang's final attack. Putting one and one together, she knew exactly what had so captured Yang's attention.

There, upon her head in all their cute glory, were Blake's cat ears, at last exposed to the world. Blake face was frozen in a picture of shock and disbelief, her mind racing to try to find some excuse, or at least to buy time for a proper explanation. This wasn't how she intended to broach the subject.

Blake had little time to consider her position before Cardin spoke up.

"Why the heck are you guys dancing?" he yelled, pointing to team JNPR, who to their credit ignored him. Dead champion meant time to boogie, so it was written, they didn't make the rules.

"What the hell is with blondie going all psycho?" he screamed, to an eye rolling Yang. She suspected this display was more about saving face before his injured and likely very angry teammates than anything.

"And since when is Belladonna a freaking animal?" Cardin said, getting into Blake's personal space. Blake, still locking eyes with her partner, and so not wanting to deal with Cardin's grimmcrap at a time like this reacted accordingly.

She gave him a solid backhanded strike, breaking his nose. Despite the gravity of the situation, she couldn't suppress a small smile.

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Glynda arrived at the scene prepared for the worst, wand at the ready and battle on her mind. What she saw gave her pause.

JNPR were dancing atop a slain Ursa major, which looked like it had been through a meat grinder. A large treasure chest was behind them, teasing rewards for what must have been a completed event.

RWBY was huddled around a shell shocked Blake, asking a flurry of questions about her ears. Glynda took some amount of relief in that, as she had wondered just how long Blake intended to keep that a secret. Yang and Ruby's curiosity flowed freely, must to the embarrassment and shock of Blake, while Weiss had a muted expression on her face. Glynda made a mental note to keep an eye on RWBY's team dynamics, as it didn't take a teacher with decades of experience to see a potential conflict in the making.

CDRL's present condition caused a narrowing of her eyes however. There were in terrible shape, aura in the red and covered in dirt and bruises. They looked like they had been through hell. Given who they were fighting and her known sensitivities about her hair, hell was probably putting it lightly. Cardin was down on his back clutching a bloody nose, the others looked about as worse for wear.

Glynda took a second to smooth out her hair before coughing to get the team's attention.

"Would someone like to explain just what happened here?"
The Noble Roses: Chapter 13

It didn't take long to relay the day's events to Professor Goodwitch. At first the teams had devolved into a shouting match, acquisitions flying back and forth. Glynda silenced them with a raised riding crop. She proceeded to pull each team leader aside and asked them to give their description of what transpired, predictably their stories were a bit bias in favor of their own team.

CDRL had placed the blame on team RWBY, RWBY on Team CDRL, and Team JNPR had backed up RWBY, but been mostly preoccupied with the Champion Ursa Major. All the while Glynda's face was the picture of stoic. After dismissing the leaders back to their teams Glynda shook her head and surveyed the area. She saw the cardboard box box with dead wasps, the broken jars, and battle scars all around the area. There was a team battered and bruised, and a soaking wet Xiao Long. And finally, there was one unmasked faunus student, one dead champion grimm and a very large magically spawned chest that JNPR was standing before, clearly itching to loot.

Glynda rubbed her forehead. She had no doubts as to what had transpired here. "Team CDRL gather your things and report back to the staging grounds immediately. I'll decide on your punishment once we return to Beacon."

Cardin began to protest before Glynda cut him off. "That was not a request Mr. Winchester."

Cardin huffed and followed the order, gathering what was left of their jars of sap and helping his team their feet. With a glare cast back toward a smirking Yang, they departed.

"As for the rest of you, do one last sweep of the area and gather your things as well. Team JNPR, well done on the grimm suppression. Ms. Rose, Ms. Schnee and Ms Belladonna, good work as well. As for you Ms Xiao Long, report to my office once we land at Beacon, I'll decide on your punishment at that time."

"Not going to tell me now, Professor?"

"I wouldn't want to attract more grimm, Ms Xiao Long." Yang cringed, and suddenly dreaded the return home.

Glynda, with a quick check to make sure there were no other teams around quickly looted the chest and placed the rewards, including an ornate scepter, into her pack.

"Be sure to gather all your supplies, but do not loiter around. Take what is yours and quickly report to staging. Dismissed"

The guild sounded their affirmations and Glynda began her walk back. The guild wasted no time quickly looting and placing the results in their packs, there would be time enough to fawn over them once back in the dorms. They quickly gathered their equipment and the hard won jars of sap and began their own way back.

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The walk back was mostly calm, something Blake was grateful for. JNPR were talking among themselves, Nora eager to get to work on the pet project that was responsible for the burden they carried in jars on their backs. Blake knew something about it, being a fellow artificer and potion brewer, but Nora had been mute on most of the details.

Blake had managed to appease her teammates with a promise to spill the beans and answer their questions once safely back in Beacon. She felt naked without her bow, the sudden exposure weighing heavily on her. She'd rejected Ruby's offer of her spare cloak, knowing that hiding her features was now pointless: Cardin and his team knew, and thus everyone else would know shortly. She was admittedly not looking forward to dealing with the fallout. Any other time she may have just bolted, but a grimm filled forest was no place to go on walkabout, and well, the guild would probably just spam her with messages till they found her. Telepathic communications had their downsides.

Blake's eyes fell upon her team. Yang and Ruby seemed to accept it easily, their excitement clear as day. Weiss however was clearly acting reserved and had barely said a word to her since the end of the fight to subdue Yang. Blake was sure there was a conflict brewing between them, she just hoped she'd be able to manage it without harming the team's dynamics too much.

A short while later the mission had officially ended, the various teams reconvening to ship off on the return trip to school. Their gathered resources of sap were loaded onto the transports, and Blake did her best to remain stoic in the face of the gossip, of which she had no doubt she was at the forefront of. Some of the students were taken back, while others, mostly faunus, were pleased to see her finally showing off what they all knew to be her true self. Or at least what they knew about her true species. Faunus always seemed to have a way to know their own, regardless of any disguise.

Blake shut her eyes and tried to get some rest of the brief return flight, gathering her thoughts and trying to formulate a strategy for the upcoming discussion with her team. All the while Weiss's eyes were locked on Blake.

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After dropping off their excess sap at JNPRs dorm, taking note at the cackling Nora who was already at her desk preparing her alchemy set for her latest concoction, RWBY retreated to their own dorm. They had but a few minutes to rest before Yang waved her goodbyes and headed off to Glynda's office, looking more like an inmate heading to their execution than a student reporting to a teacher.

It was quiet in the dorm as they wanted for their teammate to return. Ruby tried to strike up some conversation, but neither Blake nor Weiss seemed receptive, the former too lost in her thoughts and the later making herself busy with her crafting. It seemed the promise explanation would have to wait for Yan'gs return. A dejected Ruby resigned herself to stowing away her loot and working on her own personal crafting projects.

Yang returned an hour or so later. She stumbled through the door pale as a ghost, covering in cold
sweat and a bit of what looked like frost. She said nothing, not even returning greetings, and headed straight to the shower.

A hot shower or two later, and Yang returned to the main room, plopping down on Weiss's bed, looking marginally more alive.

"So," began Ruby, "I take it she wasn't pleased?"

"That's an understatement sis." Yang said while running a hand through her hair. "Attacking another team in hostile territory, risking a state secret level of confidence, and conduct unbecoming a student huntress. Six detentions, mandatory anger management training with Glynda, and a threat that if this ever repeats she'd personally shave my head."

Ruby winced, "Ouch. You think she meant it?"

"I tried to test her. She froze me to my chair and had some aura forged scissors at my hair before you could say 'Goodwitch'. Glynda can be quite scary when provoked."

The team filed that away for later reference.

"Well, let's hope the lesson is taken to heart than." Weiss said while putting away her latest jewelry design, "We may not be there to put out the fire next time."

"On the upside,"Yang said sitting up and suddenly gaining a lot of color, "now that yours truly has returned we can get the low down from my sudden far more cute partner."

Blake chose to ignore the minor fetishism of Faunus traits from her partner as she found all eyes upon her, smiles on two of her teammates and a more neutral expression on the other.

Putting down her vials and runes, Blake walked to her bed and sat down.

"Before I take any questions, just hear me out, okay?"

"We're all ears partner."

Blake smiled and took a breath. "As you can plainly see, I'm a faunus. My disguising of my trait is a complicated matter, so I hope you are all comfortable, this may take a while to explain"

Her teammates adjusted their positions a bit and motioned for her to continue.

"First off, I never intended to hide this part of me forever, I'd planned on talking about it, it just never seemed to be the right time. Life has thrown me one curve ball after another as of late, finding the time for a heart to heart has been difficult. Part of me was terrified to have it come out as it did, the other is thankful that someone forced the issue."

"Really sorry about that, by the way." Yang said, regret coloring her face.

Blake waved away Yang's concern. "What's done is done. I guess you could call the the story of my life to date though. No one can change the past, not even a Chronomancer. Or at least I've not found a spell for that yet."

Ruby shrugged, "I've seen weirder."
Blake was sure there was a great story there, but it wasn't the time.

"Perhaps. The fact is I'm proud of what I am, but not always of what I've done, and I'm still deciding on if I'm proud of who I am. I've done things that I thought were good and noble that now I see as reckless or even despicable." Her teammates eyes widened at that, though no one spoke up.

"Wasn't like that back at the beginning however. You could say the I was living the life I was born into." Blake's fingers wove a tapestry of light before her, manifesting the image of a small child. With black hair, two small cat ears and a sign held high proclaiming faunus rights are equal rights, it was clear to her team who it was. Standing before them was Blake in her youth, loud and proud.

Weiss eyes went wide as she all but bolted upright.

"That sign, I remember those. Don't tell me...you're Ghira Belladonna's daughter, aren't you?"

"The one and only."

"Who's Ghira Belladonna?" Yang asked, trying and failing to recall that name's significance.

"He's my father, and current Chieftain of Menagerie."

"Not to mention, the former High Leader of the White Fang." Weiss added, a tinge if anger in her voice.

Ruby and Yang were taken back. "Your dad was the leader of those extremist guys?"

"Back when he was in charge, it was more a civil rights organization than an extremist one. I spent my childhood going from protest to protest, rally to rally. I waved my sign, handed out pamphlets, and attended every speech. Took plenty of licks from those hostile to our movement along the way."

Weiss looked away a bit uncomfortably. "A shame it didn't last. The civil part that is."

"A shame indeed." The image changed, replaced by miniatures if her parents, at least as Blake remembered them. "When dad and mom were called away to serve in Menagerie I was shocked. To my teenage self it was like they were abandoning the cause, abandoning our people. Words were said I'd give anything to take back. I've not seen them since."

Her teammates winced. All had their own issues or sorrows related to their parentage.

"So you stayed in with the gang after your fathers departure?"

"For a time, yes. " Weiss grew more rigid, her stance more guarded. "Why?"

"It was all I'd ever known. The fang came under the leadership of Sienna Khan after my father's departure, and high leader Khan was not opposed to using violence when necessary." The image changed again, this time depicting a tigress Faunus in black and red, a chain whip on her hip.

"Things started to escalate. Companies we once boycotted were attacked, windows smashed and stock destroyed. Picket signs were replaced by weapons, calls for justice replaced by calls for retribution."
"And from there came the kidnappings, executions, friends and business partners lost." Weiss spoke with clear venom in her words. "It was all out war, with my family in the cross hairs."

Blake looked visibly saddled, "The first time blood was split was in self defense, but as time went on it became more and more the norm. I held back, refused to indulge in such madness but others were more than happy to. I found myself wearing the ribbon around that time, as if the shame of the associating was getting to me."

Blake took a breath and recomposed.

"One day I was on a mission and I was forced to admit to myself that I no longer recognized my partner, who was completely uncaring about the potential slaughter of dozens of humans. that's when I realized the fang I knew was gone. I couldn't condone such reckless hate."

Blake stare locked to Weiss.

"I left, stopping what could have been a grave crime in the process and forsaking everything I'd ever known and been apart of.. I decided to use my skills in service to a greater good, and not to the cause of fear or torment." Blake turned to her other teammates.

The image became a shattered mask.

"I tested into Beacon, and met you all in short order. Fate was obviously going for humor pairing me with the heiress of the company I'd been raised to hate for so long, though I was glad that the image of you was very different from the woman who I've come to appreciate fighting beside."

Weiss looked away at that, trying to hide the expression on her face..

"But that wasn't all fate had in store for me, was it?" One again Blake wove an illusion, several cards appearing before her. Each was an queen from a deck of cards, and each resembled one of her teammates in the guise of their professions.

"I, who was already hiding from my past was given even greater powers of deception, and thrust into an even greater secret. But I wasn't alone this time, all of my comrades and friends were with me. I had traded one secret life for another, save this time I could use it to do good."

The cards twisted, their depictions more hostile.

"But that's how the fang started as well, isn't it? This power of ours has even greater potential for destruction, for evil. Everyday we walk a line, and it's all too easy to start down a dark path, justifying this or that as necessary evils."

"I'll not let that happen!" Ruby said, determination in her voice, "The Roses exist to fight monsters for the good of all."

"And if we become the monsters?"

"Than we fight to stop that as well."

Yang threw up a fist "Yeah!"
"Choice words for someone who nearly used her powers to beat down another team." Weiss said, half mockingly.

"And you stopped me so, validation?" Yang turned to her sister.

"I guess so?" Ruby replied with a shrug.

They decided to drop it for now, not wanting to think about it too much.

Blake resumed, "So here I stand, a former criminal, current chronomancer, and future huntress. Quite the confusing, somewhat insane combination." She faced her team. "Questions?"

"Oh, oh!"

"Yes Ruby?"

"Can we touch them? I mean, if it's not considered offensive or anything."

Blake stared at her blankly. "My controversial past laid bare, and all you care about is touching my ears?"

"Kind of?"

Blake laughed. She laughed so hard she had tears in her eyes. Wiping them away with a hand she continued. "I'm not sure what I expected. Yes Ruby, you can touch them, just be gentle, they are a part of me after all."

Ruby leaped to her feet and walked to Blake, gently reaching out and stroking Blake's cat ears. Blake couldn't help but blush at the contact.

"They are so soft! Yang come try it!"

"Right-o, pardon me partner." Yang said as she joined her sister. "Weiss you have to try this!" Yang motioned for Weiss to come near, while Ruby withdrew making some space at Blake side.

Blake eyed Weiss as she hesitantly stood and walked over, and even more hesitantly reached out. Then, ever so gently Weiss stroked Blake's ears, a small smile on her face. "They really are soft."

"Yes. Your first time touching a faunus's trait I take it."

Weiss nodded. "I, well, didn't have the best relationship with faunus before."

"Understandably. I promise I don't mean you any harm, not now or ever." Blake smirked, "Unless it's a spar, in which case you're going down, Weiss."

"In your dreams, Blake." Weiss withdrew her hand.

"Me next, they are functional right?" Yang said, pointing to Blake's ears.

"Yes, though like a cat's, they hear is a slightly different range than human ears."

"Bow must have messed with that though, like muffled it or such."
"Indeed it did."

Weiss was next. "It wasn't easy to walk away, was it?"

Blake shook her head. "It was and wasn't. It would be like you leaving behind the SDC. But at some point, the fang I knew was gone, so I did what needed to be done."

Weiss nodded. The SDC was her life, walking away would mean leaving behind all she was. It would be a hard pill to swallow, even as separate as she was from it now.

The talk would go on for some time, with Blake being bombarded with questions related to being a faunus, the discrimination she faces, life in Menagerie, and so forth. The chat continued late into the evening, only stopping briefly to fetch dinner from the dining hall.

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The day after the mission RWBY found themselves summoned to the JNPR dorm for a mission review and guild meeting. Bringing along their new gear drops, they shuffled across the hall and into their fellow guild mate's dorm.

They found seats where they could, some of them stopping to play with Xing on it's perch, and engaged in some idle chatter.

Ruby called them to order. "Alright Guild mates, lets get this shindig started. First off, congrats on a successful class mission everyone!" The guild clapped, some more so than others. "Save for a bit of a snaffu with an out of control elder sister who shall remain nameless, everything went rather smoothly and our secrets are safe." Yang scratched the back of her head in embarrassment, mouthing an apology.

"All objectives were accomplished, some new and exciting revelations came to light," Blake waved at that, knowing JNPR would have questions later, "and as a bonus, we gots us some new loot!" Ruby and Nora held their new weapons up with a cheer, everyone else holding their new armor and gear.

"Let's start with that, shall we?" Ruby shifted her weapon into scythe mode and held it out to display. "As you can see, Forever Fall's theme seems to be nod to the old school. Hammer forged aura steel blades and loads of brass fixtures, it's like they walked out of the great war and into our hearts."

"Reminds me a lot of Crocea Mors, in both design and construction." Jaune said, seeing the obvious parallels to his family heirloom. "The armor is similar, it's like it walked out of a historical drama. Functional though, more so than any actual artifact would be."

"But artifacts they are not, which is quite concerning," Nora added, drawing attention to her.

"Go on…” Ruby said, interest perked.
"See these?" Nora said, pointing to two nozzles on her new weapon. "These are rocket assets for powered swings. I created and installed those on Magnhild just last week, yet this weapon has them built in. Whoever designed and created this could either see the future and predicted grenade launchers, sniper scythes, and future customization, or the weapon was created sometime in the last week and somehow aged to resemble a classical weapon."

Blake nodded, "Could be time magic or related, there is a lot we don't know about how this all works."

"Ether way, " Pyrrha added, "Between this and the sudden meta events, someone or something is keeping a very close eye on us."

"We've had our suspicions about that, but try as we might, we've never been able to find any sort of administrator or game master or whatever." Yang said with a shrug.

"Yet another thing to look into." Everyone agreed with Weiss there.

"Next up is the new I suppose, Nora, take it away."

Nora held up a small handled aerosol sprayer, "This ladies and gentlemen is why we went though all that trouble yesterday."

"What is it?"

"Glad you asked Ruby! What you see here is the result of what Professor Peach and I have been working on the last few weeks. Now her concoction is a bit different in formulation, but I was able to cut some corners by means of adding a few grimm bits to the recipe, thanks to Blake for some creative ideas there. The professor's will work similarly, just with a different formulation. To show what it does, I'll need a volunteer to reduce their aura a bit."

"You need someone to hurt themselves? Who'd volunteer for that?" Yang said. Blake and Weiss responded by sharply elbowing her in the sides. Clearly not all was forgiven after the mission.

"Thanks for being a team player Yang!"

Yang wheezed out a "no problem."

"Okay folks, now watch her aura pool". Everyone focused on Yang with their UI's. Nora pressed the trigger on the aerosol can, spraying Yang with a fine blueish mist. To their collective amazement, Yang's missing chunk of aura refilled.

"You created a spray to replenish Aura? That's amazing!" Jaune said.

"It's more we recreated the effect that summoned water has, with both the health/aura restore and even a mild condition purge. We based it on samples provided by Professor Goodwitch, as well as some spring water thingy that seems to be a summon-able skill for folks from Mistral. Seems to work best as a fine mist, rather than chugging it. Helps stretch the supply as well.."

Ren smiled, "No matter the how, it's an amazingly accomplish for you and the professor. This could do a lot of good for a lot of people."

"Thanks Ren!" Nora said with a blush. "Now the professor will probably distribute this like so, but
I've something else in mind." Nora tapped a button on her wrist mounted controls, and a Gyro shifted into flight mode and flew towards her from her desk. "Say hello to the Medic Gyro!" The gyro itself was painted with blue symbols the guild had correlated with healing spells.

"A flying heal bot? Freaking awesome." Yang's statement drew many nods of agreement.

"Yep! I'm also working on a different formulation for more effective purging of more conditions, but it's looking like it may too thick to disperse via a mist. Also, its..well, you'll see when I finish the next batch."

The guild suddenly felt a chill in the air.

"Anyways,' Ruby said hoping to move along from whatever ill omen was suddenly sucking the life out of the room, " let's move onto more general business. Weiss, how's the guild bank looking?"

The guild moved onto general business and conversation. Reports were given, training plans detailed, and plans set in motion for the near future.

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Glynda sighed and took another sip of her tea. The class trip, while officially a success had also been a source of great stress for the professor.

It wasn't the disciplinary infractions that were giving her a headache, such things were easily handled, but rather the continued issues with Vale's sensor grid. Under normal circumstances, there was no way a large grimm such as the one JNPR had destroyed should have been able to get that close to Vale while evading detection.

The grid was a vital early warning system for the city, without it they would be forced to detect grimm using spotters. Whether those be people with scopes or cameras, their range and utility were vastly inferior to the grid.

Glynda thumbed through the reports from others in the Survey Operations and Reconnaissance Program, trying to find some pattern to the anomalies and faults, and perhaps even correlate them to the sightings of champions or suspected champions, non guild groups lacking the UI's classification abilities and reporting instead on visual estimates of size or age. More data was needed, and that meant more missions into potentially dangerous territory. Glynda took note of several suspect areas that were remote enough for guild action.

Putting down the reports Glynda poured herself another glass of tea. Something about it's pleasant aroma always cut through her stress like a flamesword through an errant boarbatusk.

A knock at her office drew her attention. She knew that pattern anywhere.

"Come in Headmaster."

Ozpin opened the door and let himself in. " I hope i'm not disturbing your work."
Glynda shook her head, "Not at all, just finishing up before heading home for the evening."

Ozpin nodded, leaning on his cane. "Your research on the anomalies gnawing at you again?"

"Indeed. The source continues to elude me. It's not random though, that much is for sure."

Ozpin didn't like the implications of that. "Send me any revised deployment plans, I'll take a look and get the assignments out to the relevant teams at once. We can't ignore the potential threat here, not with the festival and its guests arriving so soon." Between the arrival of students from other academies, Atlesian security, and the influx of tourists and traveling in to see the festivities, any potential lapse could be devastating.

"Of course." Glynda made a mental note to do just that. "How is your own research going?"

Glynda motioned to a chair, Ozpin accepting it with a nod as he sat down.

"Well enough. The genealogy search will take some time, but I've called in a few discrete favors to help it along. Materials research is going well, nothing to really hide there so progress is brisk, as is the alchemical research." Glynda nodded along, always impressed by the headmaster's network of contacts and resources, something built up over multiple careers.

"On a related note, I have something for you, a gift from professor Xiao Long of Signal Academy."

Ozpin reached into his coat and pulled out a datacard. "It's encrypted with the usual password."

Glynda raised an eyebrow at that and inserted the card into her workstation, careful to load it into a sandbox area isolated from the general network. As she started to read the files contained within, her eyes widened.

"What is this?"

"It's Taiyang's research on the matter of the guild, its abilities, mechanics, etc. It's quite a bit more academic than the reports the students have generated. Meticulously cataloged, researched and indexed, as one would expect from someone in academia. It is everything Taiyang has gathered from first hand experience, as well as experimentation and data gathered from Qrow and his daughters."

While it only covered the four professions Taiyang had direct access to, the information was extensive. Not only that, but Glynda also saw surveys of profession distributions for many of the students at Signal, as well as the staff and misc huntsmen Taiyang associated with. It was a treasure trove of information. Taiyang had certainly not been idle the last year.

"This is, rather incredible."

"Indeed it is Glynda. I'd like you to combine that information with our own, and though that, create something of a index or encyclopedia of everything we know about how this all functions. I'll use it as a comparison with more ancient magical systems or treatises, and perhaps we can discover the driving source behind it all, or at the very least, a working knowledge for when newer aspirates are brought into the fold."

That got Glynda's attention. "You're planning on further expanding the guild?"

Ozpin shook his head. "In the short term, no. But there is no way I can hide this forever, and there is always the possibility that Ms. Rose is not the only source. After all, someone gave it to her originally."
"We have been fortunate that all known adherents thus far have been positive examples. I fear it's only a matter of time till more nefarious ones show themselves.."

Ozpin took a sip of his ever present coffee. "Best to be prepared for all circumstances."

"Speaking of which, are you planning on telling James when he arrives? Given what he's doing for us, and his long term presence here, it may be impossible to keep it from him, especially with Atlas monitoring the area on their own."

"I'm prepared to do so, yes, but still working on the exact nature of what and how i'll be briefing him."

Glynda smirked, "Should be an interesting conversation."

"That's putting it lightly." Ozpin stood and Glynda responded in kind, their impromptu meeting clearly over. Glynda escorted the headmaster to the door.

"Be sure not to work too late."

"I'll wrap things up soon. After all, I have some new light reading to do once I get home."

Ozpin smiled and let himself out without another word.

Glynda returned to her desk and gathered her things, taking a moment to eject the data card and stow it safely away in her pack. Despite her faith in Ozpin and his preparations, Glynda couldn't shake the feeling in the pit of her stomach that all these events were interrelated, and that perhaps they were in the calm before some great storm.
The Noble Roses: Chapter 14

Weiss and Ruby found themselves in the Beacon courtyard come Friday afternoon, dressed in their casual clothes and watching the airships come in from their seat on a bench.

Weiss had a tablet scroll open before her, tapping icons as various students disembarked, many carrying luggage. The first of the students were starting to arrive from the other academies, intending to compete in the upcoming Vytal Festival.

Oh how she loved the Vytal Festival!. The planning, the organization, the economic stimulus! It was everything a Schnee could hope for. What was really salivating to her this year was the benefits her UI was affording her: Level ranges, professions, buffs, all cleanly and neatly organized, ripe for her consumption. And consume she did, gleefully.

Weiss's eyes darted too and fro, taking in the measure of each of the newcomers and then jotting down notes about each. Sweet, delicious intelligence, all for her. And well, for her team, she couldn't win Vytal without them after all.

Ruby's eyes were also a flutter, though she was focused on the weapons the students were carrying, or at least those whose weapons she could see. The variety was extensive, and she had little idea how some even intended to fight with what they had. Her observations also took Ruby's mind off the strange giggles and out of place smile Weiss was giving off, her partner enjoying this activity a bit too much for Ruby's taste.

Weiss tore her eyes from the buffet of delicious information and checked the time on her tablet scroll . "They're late."

"Who's late?" Ruby said, jolted from her appreciation of the displayed arms.

"Yang and Blake, we were suppose to meet at 3:00. It's 3:05."

Ruby rolled her eyes. "They're on their way, as I'm sure you know, given you've been spamming party chat for updates. Yang stopped by the room to change after detention, and Blake's heading here from the library, which is quite a walk."

"The Faunus Student Union meeting holding her up beyond the normal meeting time?"

"Yep. Turns out breaking a racist bully's nose makes one quite popular with one's fellows."

"Still surprised that didn't net her a detention of her own."

Ruby shrugged, "I guess even Glynda can let some stuff slide, situation warranting." She turned to her partner, "I'm just glad the situation between you and Blake is improving, you two were so on edge the last few days."

"We are not 'on edge', as you so exasperatingly claim, Ruby." Weiss said with a corrective tone, "While Blake's history is still a mild concern, she has acted exemplary in her duties and has given
us no reason to doubt her. She placed a great deal of trust in us by discussing her background with
the team, and I'm doing my best to maintain that level of confidence and trust."

Blake chose this time to arrive, "And all I ask for is to keep an open mind, and extend that trust to
other Faunus, and not assume anyone who breaks the occasional rule..."

"Or occasional nose" Yang helpfully added as she ran up, recalling a certain Mr Winchester's
unfortunate run in with Blake's principles.

Blake nodded, blush on her face, "Or that, yes, is a vagabond destined to sign up with the
extremely misguided souls who throw their lot in with the current fang." Weiss didn't challenge the
description, trying to be civil and knowing Blake's stance quite well.

"On that, we can agree." Weiss said, giving one last look to the offloading students and reviewing
the screen before her. "Though, I may still ruffle a few feathers in my...descriptions of certain
individuals, I am doing my best to learn from our unique relationship and adjust my position to a
more positive stance."

Blake smiled, "Likewise." The two of them shared a curt nod.

"So how are the Faunus students at the union handling the fallout with Team CDRL?" Yang asked,
taking a seat. Blake leaned against the bench and let out a breath.

"A mix of elation that a bully got what he deserved, and some fears of retaliation if said bully takes
out his aggression on them to save face. Some say fighting back is the correct path, others fear that
may end with them branded along the likes of the white fang due to the violence."

"Big gulf between defending oneself against a bully and the extremism of the Fang."

"True Yang, but not every human sees it that way. To many, any violence no matter how justified
is the same as extremism."

Weiss contemplated this, knowing she was guilty of such thought in the past. "I suppose the
question is how measured a response is justified. Professor Goodwitch did allow you your
retribution for example, I don't think the school would frown upon reasonable self defense."

"Yeah, not to mention Velvet out levels Cardin and could totally take him if she tried." Yang had
seen the rabbit Faunus perform in class spars, and knew as well as the others she had skill where it
counted.

"And that's where the students are divided. Clearly yelling stop doesn't work, but how far can we
go, or rather should we go? It was that very question that separated the old white fang from the
current one. No one here wants to end up on the wrong side when the dust settles." Blake mentally
sighed at the memories this all brought up, and decided to move onto another subject.

"So how's it looking?" Blake asked, reviewing the incoming students.

Weiss looked over her results. "The general mix is about the same as Beacon's, ditto for the level
range. It's pretty easy to tell the more experienced from the newer students." Weiss was quite fond
of the UI's ability to rapidly classify any huntsman within view. Yang, Ruby and Blake looked over
Weiss shoulder, the screen showing a list of profession icons and level ranges for each student. No
names yet though, that would come after introductions in class.
"Any of the rare ones?" Yang said, eyeing the results.

"A few, again about the same as Beacon. No Reapers though, if that's what you're asking."

"Good to know." Yang said with a clap of her hands. It was almost cheating in her mind to have such a breakdown of their peers, a distinct advantage the guild offered over other students. "Now, we going to get this show on the road? Vale awaits!"

"We'd already be on the road if a certain blonde wasn't in detention."

"Worth it." Weiss shook her head at Yang's response and collapsed the tablet, stowing it in her pack. Together the team stood and started toward the airship docks themselves.

"So looking forward to this! It's been ages since we've been to the Vale Royal Library." Ruby said, arms raised in cheer. The Library was the largest and most extensive in Vale, a jewel for seekers of knowledge.

"Not since the last trip with Dad. Beacon has its perks though, no need to haul him around this time." The Academy extended checkout benefits to beacon students, as well as instructors from Beacon or Signal.

"What was the nature of your previous trips? Research or pleasure?"

"Bit of both, Blake" Ruby said, practically skipping along. "We were searching for information, but without more to go on it was a literally needle in a haystack. We also picked out some personal reading, and some stuff for signal homework."

"This time, we know exactly what to look for, or at least a more targeting area of focus." Weiss said, swiping her scroll over the airship dock turnstyle. The others followed suit.

"Yep! Art history and with any luck, what artifacts from a certain Kaspar ended up at what temples or collections here in Vale. Then it's off to see them in person! Oh I can't wait!" Ruby was literally hopping with excitement as they took their seats and buckled in for the journey.

"S'right! So let's grab our wheels and head across town. Shouldn't take us long to get there this time of day."

The trip was a short one, the airships flying but a few miles to their landing site. Disembarking the girls walked the short distance to the garages where students and faculty stored their various vehicles. Yang typed the access code into her scroll and opened the one the sisters had reserved, which opened to show Bumblebee and Hummingbird in all their two wheeled splendor.

"How did you two come to own your own vehicles at your age, anyways?" Weiss said, as she reached for her helmet.

"Well Bumblebee was dad's ride back in the day, I started to use it after getting my license senior year at Signal."

"And I purchased Hummingbird with funds from my hunts once Yang got formally accepted into Beacon. I had been riding along with her to school, but wanted my own if she was going to be gone as it was that or ride in zippy." Ruby patted her scooter with pride in her eyes.
"Zippy?" Blake said, adjusting her new Faunus friendly helmet, a very recent purchase overnighted to her. Her ears cried out in relief that they'd no longer be subjected to the horrors of Yang's old backup helmet.

"The Xiao Long - Rose family car." Yang said with a smile, not that Blake could see it as she was sitting behind her partner.

"I love Dad, but riding around with your dad totally kills one's image of cool."

"Says the girl in a cape." Weiss said as she climbed onto the back of Hummingbird and wrapping her hands around Ruby's waist, thankful that Ruby had said cape removed for the trip. Blake similarly mounted up on Bumblebee behind Yang.

"Hey now, capes are cool." Ruby protested, "Uncle Qrow wears one, as does Glynda. Heck, even Yang has a butt cape going on."

"It's a half skirt, not a butt cape!" Yang said, mock offense in her tone.

Ruby stuck out her tongue as the scooter's engine hummed to life and she started toward the garage exit. "It's so a butt cape!" Ruby said, gunning the engine and taking off.

"Get back here! No getting the last word via dust off, that's my gig!" Yang said, taking off after her sister, Blake laughing behind her.

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A few hours later Bumblebee and Hummingbird pulled up to the curb in front of one of the many temples in the city of Vale, their riders dismounting and removed their helmets with a toss of hair and a stretch of their legs.

Yang took in the sight before her, "This the place sis?"

"According to that guide we found at the library yeah." Ruby said, comparing the address with the one listed in the guide.

"Interesting architecture." Weiss said, unfamiliar with the Vale style but appreciative of it's detailed construction. She did see some common notes in said design that were shared with temples in Atlas, such as the circular stained glass elements.

The Temple in question was modest in size compared to some in the city. Stained glass and stonework spoke of past wealth and prestige, relics of an age where faith was far more important to the population than the current day. Despite the decline in reverence in recent years, there was a fair sized group of people milling about as the team made their way inside.

The interior was nice, with wooden pews and devotional artwork dotting the walls. The devotees were of all ages and professions, from small children with their parents buying charms for luck in school, to veteran huntsmen saying prayers for deployed or fallen comrades. Weiss mentally noted many of the clergy had professions, indicating some may have been past huntsmen themselves, or otherwise had their aura unlocked at some point.

Weiss and Blake looked around in curiosity and awe, neither having previously visited a Vale style
temple. There were common elements to be sure, but given the wide variety of faiths on Remnant there were also stark differences.

"Anyone see the statue?" Yang said, looking around. There was quite the selection of art on display.

"Over here" Blake said with a wave, pointing to a stature of a winged woman along one of the walls. The group made their way to the piece in question, noting a few other persons were also admiring it.

"Look familiar sis?" Yang said, turning to Ruby.

Ruby examined the statue, taking in the details of her dress and face and comparing it to the images on her scroll of the art book's wood print as well as the grainy picture form the guide.

"It's similar, but a bit off."

"Maybe that Kaspar guy used a different model for this one?"

"Dunno." Ruby said, looking at the statues from different angles. She didn't think it was the lighting throwing her off.

"The discrepancy is likely due to the fact that this is not a work by the mistral artist Kaspar. It is in fact a reproduction by a local artist, Dominic Aeris."

Ruby turned to face the source of the interruption, a red haired young women in a gray and green dress. She noted the woman had a profession, indicated by a bomb icon.

"You sure? The guide says it's a Kaspar original."

The girl nodded her head, "I am positive. Note the sculptors mark on the base. Those are not the ones used by Kaspar.

Yang took a closer look. "Damn, she's right." Yang's language drew a disappointing stare from one of the nearby priestess. Yang mouthed a quiet appology in response.

"You've got a good eye for detail. Are you one of the staff here?" Ruby said, turning fully to face the young woman.

"Oh no, I'm just here as part of my study of Vale culture. My occupation is that of a huntress student from Atlas Academy, I'm here to fight in the tournament"

"Here for vytal are you?" Weiss said, studying the girls details and making mental notes of her profession and level, It was comparable to her peers.

"Affirmative, I am combat ready!" she said, raising her fists in determination.

"That's...and interesting way of putting it.. I'm Ruby by the way." Ruby said, holding out a hand. The women took it without hesitation.

"I'm Penny, it's a pleasure to meet you Ruby!"
"I'm her sister Yang."

Penny took the offered hand again, "A pleasure to meet you Yang!"

"I'm Weiss." Weiss said with a smile, which Penny returned.

"And I'm Blake." Blake said with a wave, being outside arms reach. "I wonder why the guide is off, maybe we have the wrong statue?"

Penny shook her head after thinking for a second. "I do not believe so, as there are no others of this style present. Perhaps we could consult with one of the resident clergy?"

"Worth a shot I guess." Ruby said, putting away her scroll and looking around for one of the temple's staff.

After asking around the group was directed to one of the elder priestesses who served as the temples curator.

"Pardon us", Ruby began, "we are looking for a Sister Petrosinella? Is she here?"

"Indeed she is, you are speaking to her." The sister in question was an older woman with ankle length gray hair, and fine if weathered features. Her office was covered in books, pictures, and artifacts under restoration or preservation. A collapsing glaive hung on the wall behind her, which given her level and profession, Ruby reasoned it was her weapon from her huntress days.

The sister motioned for them to enter her office and they took some offered seats."Please take a seat. Would any of you care for some tea?"

"Thank you, but no." Ruby said with a polite wave of her hands. The others politely declined as well.

Sister Petrosinella poured one for herself. "It's so rare to see people your age interested in votive art or faith in general." Sister Petrosinella said with a smile, "What brings you here today my children?"

Ruby took the lead and spoke, "We were interested in one of the works we were told was a part of the temple's collection, a statue by the artist Kaspar called 'Lady of Zephyrs'. Our guide says it should be here, but it looks to have been replaced."

The elder sister's face lit up at the name. "The guide you are referencing is probably an older one. We were in fact in possession of said work some time ago. Here, let me show you." The sister walked to one of the shelves and retrieved an album before returning to her desk. She flipped through the pages, and after a minute turned the book to show the group the pictures therein. Ruby's eyes went wide as she beheld it and she became utterly silent.

The statue was an exact match to the model in the art book, as far as resolution aloud. It was also, to her disbelief strikingly similar to the face of her own Dwayna, though such a thing was impossible. 200 years was a long time for such features to endure in a family tree, especially when you added Faunus traits into the mix.

Prying her eyes away from the photographs by force of will and finding her voice. "What became of the statue? Is it possible to see it?"
The Sister sighed. "I'm afraid it's currently out of our reach." This sister leaned back in her chair, a melancholy visage on their face. "It is rather a sad story I'm afraid. You see my children, some decades ago there was an attempt to build a large scale expansion of the Kingdom of Vale, a place called Mountain Glenn. It was the largest such expansion attempt in many decades, and a tremendous amount of resources and capital was invested in it. Many settlers were moved to the new city, and for a time it was prosperous."

The sister retrieved another album, this time opening it to the picture of a newly constructed temple. The Temple was similar in style to the one they were in presently, and a number of proud looking clergy and dignitaries were posing in front of it.

"As a sign of our trust and faith in the expansion, the temple moved several artifacts and artworks to a newly constructed temple in Mountain Glenn. It was thought such familiar sights would be a comfort to the new settlers. The 'Lady of Zephyrs' had a reputation as well, and was an especially symbolic transfer."

"What sort of reputation?" Blake asked.

"The statue seemed to radiate warmth, and life, where it stood there was calm and tranquility, where it traveled there was peace. This was discovered during the long passage from Mistral to Vale centuries ago. No Grimm attacked it's convoy upon the entire route, to the amazement of the ones transporting it. It was hoped this radiance would be of aid to the expansion and give peace of mind to the devoted there."

"That sounds, rather amazing actually." Weiss said. 'Almost magical' she thought.

"It was indeed, decades later I still remember it when I close my eyes."

Ruby finally recovered, "You've seen it in person?"

"Indeed I have child, though I was a huntress back then, rather than a layperson of the faith."

"What became of the expansion?" Said Penny, eyes darting between the pictures and the sister.

"The grimm happened." The group's smiles fell, knowing where this story would go.

Sister Petrosinella continued, sadness evident in her tone. "Despite the expansions significant defenses, the grimm were somehow able to breach the walls and in great numbers. Sirens flared, weapons roared, and people panicked which just served to draw more of the enemy down upon them."

"You were there, weren't you?" Blake said with wide eyes and flattened ears.

"I was indeed." Sister Petrosinella stood and ran a hand along her glaives handle before turning to face the group again. "We fought with everything we had, every last huntsmen, soldier and police but it wasn't enough to stem the tide. Entire sections of the city were overrun despite our efforts, with many people cut off from evac points and escape routes. Many thousands died before our eyes, helpless as were were to help."

She sat down and continued as the group looked on stunned silence. "The temple square was the evac point I was assigned to defend and despite the odds were held it. Wither by divine protection
or some other force, the grimm made no attempt to overrun us, and we were able to hold out until the airships could arrive. We were able to take many of the smaller relics as we left, but there was no way to take the 'Lady of Zephyrs' given it's bulk. It was with sad eyes and heavy hearts we left it, and the ones we couldn't save behind. Upon my return to Vale, and joined the faith, eager to catalog what we had saved and give thanks for the lives that were spared, and to mourn those we lost."

"That's...Terrible. I can't imagine.." Yang said, shaking from the thought of it. Blake placed a arm around her in comfort.

"It was that and more, my child. We've had open requests for the retrieval of other artifacts from the temple complex, but the area is quite dangerous and the council has placed higher priority on retrieving other things, such as vital records, resources, or even lien form the bank vaults. Old statues, regardless of how revered, are not high on their priority list given the complexities of transport."

"It is a very complex matter of logistics indeed." Penny stated, mentally reviewing the requirements.

The sister said mournfully "And so she remains. I'm afraid there isn't much more I can say on the subject."

"We're sorry to bring up such bad memories, sister." Weiss said with sincerity.

"It's alright my child, it's good to remember those we saved, and those we couldn't. I've faith the lady will come back to us in time." Sister Petrosinella's voice spoke of conviction.

"Mind if I snap a few photos?" Ruby said, holding up her scroll.

"by all means." Petrosinella said, pushing the album toward Ruby.

Ruby took several pictures of the album's contents, and then with thanks the group departed the office, thoughts swirling around. They stopped at the temple stairs, and took a seat.

"Well, that's one major downer but at least we have some new information out of it." Yang said, leaning back and looking up to the sky.

"It is indeed a distressing turn of events. You all seemed surprised by the news of the expansion, is it not something well known here in Vale?" Penny said,

Ruby shook her head, "I've never heard of it before. Yang?"

"Me neither sis, first time I've heard the name Mountain Glenn in that context. An entire expansion, and all those people wiped out. How is that not something they teach us?"

"Mass grief could attract the grimm, the council may have turned to downplaying the loss to minimize the effects." Weiss reasoned. It was not unheard of for bad news to quickly be forgotten on Remnant, no matter how painful. Tragedies fell off the news rapidly, the fallen all but forgotten by the kingdoms, their memorials quiet and there were few graveyards on Remnant, cremation and scattering being preferred by most. What few grave markers there were were often scattered or isolated.
"So where do we go from here?"

"Well Blake, not much we can do. I suppose we look into Mountain Glenn and those mission requests, may be something we could attempt in the future. We can also dig more into the effect that statue had, maybe someone documented more about it." Yang played a bit with her hair as she spoke.

"Worth a shot I suppose."

"You all seem rather focused on this piece of art, does it hold some special significance?" Penny, said, tilting her head.

"Well, " began Ruby, "You could say that. It reminds me of someone from my past who I've been searching for."

"I wish you luck on your search then, Ruby." Penny smiled and gave a thumbs up.

"Thanks. Oh, speaking of luck, almost forgot, be right back!" Ruby said before vanishing in a cloud of rose petals.

"Quite the interesting semblance." Penny said, eyeing the cloud.

"Interesting is a good way to describe my sister." Yang said as she snatched a petal out of the air. Within seconds it decayed back into dust, leaving no trace behind.

Ruby reappeared a minute later. "Okay I'm back! That comment about luck reminded me I needed to pick up some charms myself."

Ruby handed charms to Yang, Blake and Weiss, who accepted them gracefully. Weiss noted that the charms actually had stats, clearly the temple staff was doing something right with them. Ruby pocketed one herself, and to Penny's surprise offered the last to her.

"Here, as thanks for your help in there."

"For..for me?" Penny said as she accepted it. She held the charm up to her eyes, examining every last detail she could perceive. Her smile was positively radiant.

"Well yeah, it's the friendly thing to do. You know, reward people who help you."

Penny was absolutely still. "Friendly as is like something does to a friend? Are we...friends?"

Sweat rolled down Ruby's head, "ah, sure why not?"

"Sensational!" Penny said, throwing her hands up. "I've made my first friend in Vale! Oh the things we can do together" Penny paused a second as she compiled what she knew about her new friend. "We can visit local museums, discuss art and history, or more typical activities such as discussing cute boys, trying on cute and fashionable clothing, or other shared hobbies or activities!"

Ruby didn't quite know how to respond, not being the best with social situations as she was.

[Party: Ruby: Help...]
Weiss stepped up to the plate. "While those do activities do such interesting, they will have to wait for some other time. We've got a number of other errands to run today, but I'm sure we will see you around campus in the common weeks and months."

[Ruby to Weiss: I so owe you.]

[Weiss to Ruby: thank me later. Intensively.]

Penny calmed down somewhat, "Can I assist you in any of your other endeavors today?"

Ruby shook her head. "We should be good, and well, not enough room on the bikes for you. But yeah, I'll see you back at Beacon, and thanks again for the help in there."

"It was my pleasure. Thank you for the thoughtful gift, I shall treasure it."

"Till next time Penny."

"Till next time friend Ruby!"

With a smile and a wave Penny turned and left, walking down the street toward whatever objective was next on her agenda.

"Strange girl. Interesting, but strange." Yang said as she put on her helmet and remounted Bumblebee.

"Perhaps, but she was a big help, though no doubt we would have discovered the issue in time ourselves." Weiss was sure of that, though Penny had saved them a considerable amount of time.

"So what is the plan for the rest of the evening, seeing as our primary objective is shot?" Blake said as she mounted up behind her partner.

"Not to mention you looked a bit shook up when you saw the photographs, and that was before the bad news about the expansion." Weiss said, holding onto Ruby.

"It's just...she looked just like her, like Dwayna."

"Well yeah sis, she did model for it."

"Not that one, my Dwayna. It like like someone had carved the face right from my memories. Even the wings were the same."

"Are you sure Ruby? I mean, there is no way it can be the same person. The model was a human after all, and it was ages ago." Her partner said as she mounted up herself.

"I'm not sure what to think Weiss, it's just another mystery." Ruby keyed the ignition and Hummingbirds motor came to life. "Not much we can do about it now though, so I'm thinking Mistralian food and frozen yogurt, might as well turn this into a team outing. We'll hit the books tomorrow and see what we can dig up about the 'Lady of Zephyrs' and the events of Mountain Glenn."

"Works for me. " Yang said as she started the ignition on Bumblebee. "Any preference on restaurants anyone?"
"I know a good one, it's not far. " Blake said, adjusting her gear and wrapping her arms around Yang.

"Cool, lead the way partner"

The team sped off, eager to enjoy the rest of the evening and mentally making plans for their research to come. Questions were piling upon questions, and no one was quite sure what to make of it yet.

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Beacon's library was as busy as it ever was, which is to say it wasn't. Given it was the weekend, most students were off in Vale seeing the sights, shopping, or seeking entertainment. The transfer students were busy orientate themselves to the campus, and undergoing the move in process. Other students were off training, taking side missions, or otherwise advancing their skills as huntsmen and huntresses.

RWBY was more or less alone in their corner of the library, sitting at one of the longer tables, a stack of books before them. A few students were sitting at adjacent tables, mostly playing board games or reading leisure books and comics. Each member of the team had paper and scroll in front of them as well, both for taking notes and for cross referencing stuff on the local network.

Yang leaned back in her chair and let out a breath. "Well, after two hours of reading I can say some things for certain. First off, I'm starting to get hungry here. Second, casualty reports from a major disaster are probably the most depressing thing ever to read. And last, after reading them, I really want to bash a few grimm skulls in."

"Do tell." Weiss said, setting down her tablet.

Yang sat up, "Sister Petrosinella wasn't exaggerating when she described it, Mountain Glenn was an absolute disaster. The sheer loss of life was just staggering, fewer than a third of the population survives, most of them from the group who was airlifted out or took refuge in the transit tunnels, sealing them from the surface before those too were breached. The council itself had to order the main tunnel sealed to prevent a full on invasion of Vale, resulting in a whole lot of civilians and huntsmen being forced to use emergency access routes to try to escape, and few survived the trip through the forest those lead to. Even the airships had to be called back in time, as the sky became choked with smoke and flying grimm. It was horror, pure and simple."

Weiss nodded, "Matches what I've been able to find. Hundreds of rescue missions were launched in the days, weeks and months that followed, each turning up fewer survivors. Eventually they turned to asset recovery and straight up grimm extermination, missions that are still on the books as open today, including the ones the sister told us about. The entire expansion area is still labeled as grimm infested despite decades of culling."

"Anything we could take on?"

"Afraid not Yang. Most are reserved for upper class men or professional huntsmen, depending on the area. While we are...uniquely suited to retrieval missions, we'd need a dang good reason to get approval for even a recon mission at our grade level."

Yang contemplated that. The guild could bring some awesome powers to bare, and Mountain
Glenn was isolated enough that they could go all out profession wise, but it would be a dangerous proposition and would require more than an afternoon to complete. They needed more of a hook to get the headmaster on board.

"Hmm, what about you Ruby? Any luck?"

Ruby lowered her book and checked her notes on the tablet scroll. "Beacon's library of course doesn't have much on art history so I messaged Doctor Oobleck for advice, and he pointed me toward the biographies and memoirs section." Ruby tapped the book before her, "Turns out we did have a memoir from one of the huntsmen companies that provided inter-kingdom caravan protection back in the day. As luck would have it, it does reference the transport of the statue as an especially proud and memorable moment in her career."

That got Yang and Weiss's attention, Blake was looking at her scroll attentively but turned her cat ears toward her team leader. "Though they were approached by grimm numerous times during the transport, the grimm always backed off before contact, literally recoiling away from the group. The few who did approach closer seemed to cower as they drew near and were easy prey for the huntsmen. It also mentions how serene the caravan itself was, with little infighting and high spirits all around, something that extended to every village along the way. Some even left the company and settled in Vale after the journey's end, not wanting to leave the statue's new home."

"Could have just been an overly positive attitude due to transporting a holy object or votive work." Yang said.

"Or it could be a sign that something special was going on, perhaps in the area of you know what." Weiss suggested, subtly frosting a small patch of the table, which evaporated soon after. Though they knew little about magic's full effects, the team knew it existed and thus couldn't discount it. "After all, grimm don't feel fear, so they shouldn't recoil from anything."

Ruby let out a small breath. "Sadly that's all I've solidly been able to find about the statues effects, most other texts I've found mostly deal with it as a local sight to see or news about it's transport to Mountain Glenn. There were a few references to other transport companies who carried similar statues to other locations from Mistral, but the references are vague at best. Some don't even describe the same style of statue."

Weiss was intrigued, "Kaspar created works with other models?"

"Apparently so, though this doesn't mention much about them. We'll have to wait for the headmasters results to know more, or maybe hit the Royal library again and see what we can dig up." Ruby said with a rub of her temples. "How about you Blake, anything interesting?"

Blake didn't answer, still absorbed in her reading.

Yang waved at her, "Remnant to Blake, you there Blake?"

Blake's eyes snapped up at that, "Oh sorry I was just .distracted."

"Something caught your eye?"

"A lot of things actually, Ruby. But on the subject of Mountain Glenn, I did find a number of news articles that backed up much of what you already know. Survivors stories fall into what we already know about the city being overrun and how they managed to flee. The stories about the temple
complex match the effects from the caravan, with far more people rescued from that area than any of the other aerial evacuation points."

"More signs that something is definitely up with that statue." Ruby said, making note of Blake's information.

Blake continued, "No formal explanation was ever given for the defense failure, speculation was everything from materials failures and personal error to sabotage, industrial accident or deliberate enemy action. Inquiries were held, but no formal judgements made. There are still open investigations, though progress depends on retrieved records or footage from the attack, which are sparse at best. Merlot industries comes up a lot, but that's about it."

"Not much to go on there." Weiss said, playing with her hair as she considered the information. "Company name ring any bells to anyone?"

Yang shook her head. "Not here, must be before our time, I suppose it's one more thing to look into. So what's got you so distracted Blake, it doesn't sound like you found too much of interest."

"It's not the Mountain Glenn news that distracted me, it was this." Blake said, flicking a new story on her scroll to send it to her teammates."

'Crime wave continues as second dust store hit this week' the headline read. "Been hearing a lot about that, Ruby herself disrupted one. Torchwick, wasn't it?" Yang asked, looking to her sister.

"Yep, Roman Torchwick, along with some unidentified huntress that Glynda and I fought. So what do you find so interesting about that, Blake? They hit your favorite shop?"

"Yes actually, or at least one of the more faunus friendly ones. The details of the robbery are what really concerns me."

Weiss's brow raised, anger apparent on her face. "The White Fang?"

Blake nodded, "So it says. Faunus in grimm styled masks taking only dust and leaving the money."

Yang's confusion mirrored the others, "I thought they only hit places that were anti-Faunus, why attack this one?"

"Why indeed. It's counter to their normal operations, and well, they have never needed dust in this amount before." It just didn't make any sense Blake thought. 'Adam would never hit somewhere faunus depended on like this.'

"Copycats maybe? Maybe Torchwick's goons trying to deflect the blame or misdirect the police?" Ruby suggested.

"He's never needed to before from what I've read, but it's not something we can rule out."

"It's concerning at any rate, "Weiss interjected, "I can't see them putting stockpiles of illicitly acquired dust to any peaceful use."

"If they are responsible that is. " Blake reminded Weiss, who looked unconvinced. "The only way to know for certain would be to catch them in the act like Ruby did with Torchwick. And frankly, there are far too many dust sources in Vale to cover them all, especially if Faunus friendly ones are
on the table. Even the police haven't been able to manage it."

"Which means even if we wanted to investigate, which for the record should be the Vale Police departments job, we wouldn't even know where to start."

Blake slumped back in frustration. "It's just…aggravating." Blake swore to herself that she'd left this all behind, but she couldn't sit back and do nothing. If the Fang was a threat, she needed to know why before her past literally caught up to her and her friends.

"Couldn't help but overhear you fine ladies predicament"

Blake's ears perked up. "And you are?"

The blond haired monkey Faunus from an adjacent table put down his comic, pulled out a chair at the the team's table with his tail, and sat down. "The names Sun, Sun Wukong."

"Are you transfer student? I don't recall seeing you in class." Blake asked.

"Sure am, I'm here from Haven Academy for the Vytal festival." Weiss took immediate note of his level and profession. It was one the guild didn't have as of yet, symbolized by a winged boot. She marked down his information in her notes.

"How long were you listening?" asked a somewhat nervous Ruby. They hadn't said anything compromising, but she made a mental note to perhaps discuss things a bit more subtle next go around.

"Since the part about the magical sounding statue and the thing about the horrific disaster."

"So basically, the entire time?"

"Pretty much". Sun said with a smile.

Blake sighed, "So what do you bring to the table, Sun?"

[Party: Yang: Besides those abs.]

The rest of the team shot Yang a side eye, with a giggle from Ruby. At least Yang hadn't commented about Blake's unintentional pun.

"I think I know where you could find the Fang's next target."

"You know about the White Fang?" Sun now fully had Blake's attention.

"You mean besides the fact they are a bunch of holier than thou freaks with an itch for violence?"

Weiss tried to force down a smile and maintain a neutral face at that, and wisely remained silent. Blake gave her a small appreciative nod, clearly Weiss was trying to remain civil.

Blake continued "Yes, besides that."

"Well, on the voyage to Vale from Mistral I overheard some sailors talking about a big shipment of dust arriving today, a large Schnee freighter at that, probably to stock up for Vytal. It's being
offloaded as we speak."

Weiss smile fell. "That would be a desirable target for them, to be sure." One that Weiss couldn't allow to fall into their hands.

Blake leaned forward, "Do you know what berth the ship will be at?"

Sun leaned back, hands behind his head. "Sure do! I'll be happy to guild you there myself, after all, can't let you have all the fun here."

The team exchanged a look.

"Excuse us for just a second." Team RWBY all leaned in close.

[Party: Blake: I know this is asking a lot but…]  
[Party: Yang: Oh we are so doing this! ]

Blake was taken back. [Party: Blake: ..What?]

[Party: Ruby: Yang's right, we can't pass up this opportunity. Fang or not, we can't allow someone to steal that much dust. ]

[Party: Blake: ..Ruby?]  
[Party: I'm not opposed to this, but perhaps we should involve the authorities as well."

[Party: Yang: But what if there is a leak in the VPD? If they get spooked here, they'll just steal it from the shops and we'll never get the confirmation we need.]  
[Party: Ruby: Not to mention I busted up one of these solo, how much harder could this be? We'll have five people this time!]

[Party: Yang: It's a regular smash and grab. They show up, we smash them, the VPD grabs them, and everyone is happy.]

[Party: Weiss: I suppose we can always message Glynda or JNPR if things get too hot to call in backup.]  
[Party: Ruby: IT's not even lunchtime yet, so we have plenty of time to plan before this evening. I doubt they would be brazen enough to rob the docks during daytime.]  
[Party: Blake: I expected this to be a more difficult sell.]  
[Party: Yang: You do remember who you are talking to, right partner?]  

"So ah, are you having some sort of telepathic conversation or something?" To Sun the situation looks positively odd. The girls were exchanging looks and facial expressions, but no words.

Team RWBY froze, and all slowly turned their heads as one to face him.

Ruby answered with an unconvincing tone. "um...No?"
"It's cool, I've heard close knit teams can do that sort of thing. Still working on it with me and the guys. though. I'll send a look all like 'attack on the left flank' and they'll be like 'you want pizza for dinner?' and i'll be like 'well yeah, but this isn't the time.' "

"That's...great. Keep working on that." Ruby said with a thumbs up.

"Thanks!" Sun said, leaning in himself. "So we doing this?"

RWBY exchanged one last round of looks and nodded at Blake.

Blake smiled and turned back to Sun, "Yeah, we are doing this."

Author's notes:

Hello everyone! Enjoying the story so far I hope?

First off, thanks for all the reviews, it's great feedback and it's nice to hear from you all.

To clear up a few questions:

RWBY’s 'mission gear', which Ruby crafted for Weiss and Blake, and Yang made herself are based off the Manga outfits. Yang's has some riveted on armor as well, something she commonly does to outfits in this story.

Pyrrha's is based off her original concept sketch, and was a PVP reward for her four Mistral area tournament wins. We'll see some other PVP gear as well as time goes on.

I'll describe the other JNPR outfits in more detail when they they appear.

Most of the other big questions will be talked about in the next few chapters, so stay tuned.
“Alright team RWBY, dinner is in our tummies and everyone is chomping at the bit to get going so let’s run through the ‘awesome dust robbery prevention stakeout’ checklist.”

“For the record that’s a terrible name Ruby.”

“Duly noted Weiss.” and ignored, though Ruby didn’t voice that point. “Snacks?”

“Chips, fruit, cookies and coffee, all the essentials.” Yang said, patting their back packs. They were not rune-enhanced as they didn’t want to have to make up an excuse if Sun asked how they fit it all in there.

“Good good” Ruby said, checking the item off on her scroll. “How about potions?”

Blake held up a collection of vials. “I wasn’t sure what would work against thieves and White Fang, so I went with ‘anti-bandits’, though I object to the fang referred to as ‘bandits’.”

Weiss shrugged, “It’s not inaccurate, I mean they are stealing things and causing mayhem.”

“That’s a bit harsh, but not entirely inaccurate when you put it like that..” Blake said, remembering some of the destruction she herself had wrought in her years with the Fang. “As for the potions, I’m not even sure I mixed them right, It smells like bad cough syrup.”

“Cheap whiskey actually.” Yang said.

“Why would the smell of cheap whiskey indicate proper formulation of anti-bandit potions?”

“Dunno, Uncle Qrow discovered the recipe.” Yang said, recalling the memory. “Dad thought it was hilarious, but wouldn't tell us why.”

“Weird” Blake said while distributing the vials. “Let’s hope they are effective if the need arises.”
“And I hope they don’t taste as bad as they smell” Everyone agreed with Weiss on that point.

Ruby checked her list, “Dust?”

Blake, Ruby and Yang all held up SDC branded dust shells and magazines. “Thanks to Weiss here, we got the hookup on that front.”

“I’ll not have my team under equip for the task.” Weiss said matter of factually, arms crossed over her chest.

“Alright next up is... here we go: snazzy stakeout outfits.” The girls each posed, wearing their new duds. “Intruder, Snow pea, Hunter and Slayer armor. Check check check and check. Hurts my heart to enchant store purchased outfits, but we just didn’t have the time to produce new ones for Blake and Weiss.” It was guild fashion heresy, as far as Ruby was concerned.

“Bad enough we spent an afternoon rushing to enchant something solely for the sake of fashion. Not to mention spending an hour brainstorming names.”

“Beats the name the UI assigns things Weiss. I mean, ‘Designer Atleasian linen double breasted trench coat dress’ doesn’t roll off the tongue.” ‘For such a magical and seemingly all seeing system, the UI really sucked at naming things sometimes’ Ruby thought to herself.

“True.” Weiss said, “But I still think we could have just worn our normal mission gear.”

“Nah” said Yang, “Got to accessorize for the mission at hand. Otherwise we’d look like scrubs who wear the same outfit every day.”

“Which, if you don’t recall, is pretty much everyone else we know not named team JNPR.”

“Yeah, my point exactly” Yang looked positively smug, as did Ruby. Somewhere in Beacon, a certain fashionista’s ears were burning.
“Speaking of which, everyone got their jewelry on?” Yang said, flashing her own. The others followed suit, showing off their rings, charms, and tight fitting necklaces. “Yep, looks like we have the bling covered, Ruby”

“So wardrobe and accessories, check, check.” Ruby said checking off another box. “So how goes our butt covering contingency, partner?”

“I made a call, we’re all set on that front.”

Ruby threw up her hands, “Woo! Way to go Weiss! See, this sort of thing is why you’re in charge of the guild bank.”

“I’m in charge of a magical cargo trunk in our dorm room, Ruby. It’s not exactly some great honor to do inventory.”

“Correction, it’s a magical cargo trunk linked by awesome runes to another magic cargo trunk on Patch. So I put you in charge of two magic storage containers, not just one.” The runes of holding responsible for said connection were a gift from Taiyang, the fruit of a year of studying rune crafting as the families original artificer.

“Okay, that part is actually kind of impressive. Still a glorified stock boy though.” Weiss crossed her arms, feeling her point was made well enough.

“I’ve offered to have someone else do it, but you keep saying no.”

“Well yeah Ruby, I mean someone else may screw it up. When I took over it was a rats nest of randomly sorted items. Now it’s clean, organized, and well implemented. I’ll not have the bank in the hands of amateurs.”

Ruby didn’t know what to say about that exchange. Blake just laughed. “Okay moving on before I get more confused. Blake, drop some intel on us, what can we expect tonight?”

“Given past robberies I’d say a smash and grab. They arrive on scene, break upon a cargo container, and carry out all the dust they can. If it’s the fang, I expect similar, with the additional caveat of destroying what they can’t take with them.”
“Any notable fang we can expect to be in attendance?”

“The only White Fang higher up I know of in the area is Adam, the leader of the Vale division. Blake summoned up a small illusionary model of Adam in her hand.

“Fierce look on that guy. Well, from what I can see that’s not covered by the huge ass mask. Looks like a tough cookie.”

“That he is, Yang, but Adam’s not the sort to involve himself in something like this. He would only come along when they expect a fierce fight, and they have no reason to anticipate one here. I imagine Torchwick will be there however given Ruby’s experience.”

Yang nudged Ruby with an elbow, “Sounds like you may get a rematch, sis.”

“That villain won’t get away from me this time,” Ruby said with determination.

“Capturing him would be a boon, but remember protection of the dust should be our first priority. Not because of its value” Weiss said, cutting off a potential argument, ”but rather to deny its use. If the dust isn’t entering the black market, which it doesn’t seem to be, then it’s being stockpiled. I shudder to think what Torchwick or the Fang would have planned for such a reserve of dust.”

“Right, so secure the dust first, capture bad guys second.” Ruby gave a thumbs up, “Gotcha.”

“Also remember that not everyone will have aura unlocked, so remember to exercise proper restraint. The last thing we need is a lot of blood on our hands tonight, we are already pushing things by just being there.”

“No worry about that Blake, our UIs will sort it out.” Yang said with an arm around her partner, “Just remember no professional abilities. We’ll have Sun with us, and under no circumstances are the White Fang or Torchwick’s goons to know about it. Glynda would have our butts.”

“Not counting our communication skills that is, they are undetectable so far as I know.” added Ruby. “And remember that Torchwick at least is higher level than us. If you see him try for a two on one, keep him off balance and maybe we can take him down. At any rate, we only need to
delay whomsoever is responsible, we’ll call for the police as soon as any bad guys show up.”

“Sounds good.” Yang said with a smile, “Hows JNPR? Will they be ready if we need them?”

“I spoke a bit to Jaune, he’ll make sure they have their kit nearby, but who knows how late this will go down, or even if anyone will show up.” The team was already pushing the boundaries of acceptable behavior with this activity, having four more along would just compound their worries. “Plus it’s JNPR’s game night and well, hell itself couldn’t pry Pyrrha away from that. Introducing video games to a girl with a competitive streak may have been a mistake on Jaune’s part.” Ruby herself had learned never to challenge Pyrrha in a fighting game, as she was a very fast learner and refused to drop anything till she’d mastered it.

“We’ll be fine, after all we aren’t expecting major resistance.”

“Tempting fate there, aren’t you Weiss?” Blake said with mild concern.

“Hmm, if i’m wrong ill treat you all to any dinner in town.”

“I’ll hold you to it, Weiss. I know a great seafood place in the upscale area of Vale I’m dying to try. Real five star sort of place.”

“Sounds like a plan to me.” Yang was bouncing on the balls of her feet, “now lets jet, eager to get my beat down on here.”

Ruby cheered, “This is going to be so awesome!”

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Team RWBY met up with Sun in the courtyard and together they made their way to the docks. Given they were running plus one, they decided to leave their rides at the garage and instead took public transport to the Vale docks.

Given the lateness of the hour, the docks were mostly deserted, with only a handful of workers milling around and the occasional security patrol. The crew walked to the location where the
Schnee dust was being stored, making note of the location of security cameras and lights. While they had no ill intent, they did want to avoid raising too much suspicion for themselves.

They located a building overlooking the target area and scaled the fire escapes to the roof. “Okay, this looks good here. No way any fang could approach from the street, sea, or air without us knowing. “

“Sounds good Ruby, let’s break out snacks and get the show on the road!” Yang said with a fist pump.

Blake urged her partner to the ground. “Stay low everyone, else we’ll be silhouetted against the sky.”

“I’m with Blake here, “said Weiss, “best to stay out of sight as much as we can. Wouldn’t want to spook them before they commit.”

“That would render this all pointless I guess. But we can still break out the snacks, right?”

Blake smiled, “Yes Ruby, that shouldn’t be a problem.”

“Woo!” said the leader of Team RWBY, bringing forth a treasure trove of snacks from her pack and laying them out for the group.

“Oh man, you brought food?” Sun said, licking his lips at the sight. “Had I known that I wouldn’t have stolen these apples for you earlier.” He took said apples out of his own pack.

“Do you always casually commit theft?” Blake said, eyeing the fruit. Weiss was trying to hold her tongue, her eye having developed a tick.

“Nah, just when I’m hungry.”

“Good to know.” Yang said filing the factoid away. “Help yourself to ours if you want, we brought plenty, and it’s fully paid for.”
“Will do” Sun said, reaching for some chips. The crew settled in and relaxed, it was bound to be a long night.

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Two hours later the crew was still waiting, the stars having come out and the night grown darker. Ruby was listening to some music with her headphones, while Yang was laid out and playing a game on her scroll. Weiss was looking toward the road while Sun and Blake kept their eyes toward the sea.

“I’m still surprised you heard about this on the voyage here, it’s not something cabin crew would normally be privy to”. Weiss said, eyeing a passing car but dismissing it as it drove by.

“Oh, I didn’t hear it from them, “ Sun said, “ I heard it from the below decks crew.”

Blake’s ears twitched at that, “What were you doing below decks?”

“Sleeping really. Not much else for a stowaway to do after all.”

Weiss looked at Sun in shock. “You stowed away? Why on Remnant would you do that, Haven Academy paid your way here.”

“I dunno, it was fun? And hey, got to pocket the ticket money for souvenirs later.”

Weiss started to shake.

[Party: Weiss: I’m not saying anything, i’m being good, help me please…]

Blake was working on throwing a line to her teammate when the wind suddenly picked up around them.

“I know it’s windy today but this is a bit much” Yang said, stowing her scroll.
“That’s not wind it’s propulsion wash, Bullhead incoming.” Blake said noting the circling aircraft, searchlight scanning the ground for signs of activity. The pilot seemed to be focusing on the docks.

“Looks like they missed us.” Ruby said, Crescent Rose at the ready in rifle mode.

“Lucky us, “ Yang said, snapping her gauntlets in place. “Question is whose in the bullhead?”

“I think we are about to find out.” Weiss said as the aircraft landed between the shipping containers. A moment after it landed, the side door opened and a ramp descended, followed shortly by a number of armed individuals wearing black and white uniforms and masks, the uniforms emblazoned with the emblem of a red wolves head. They were carrying tow cables and related tools.

“The White Fang,” Weiss said, eyes steely and anger in her tone.

Blake sighed, eyes shut in anguish. “Yeah, that’s them alright. I so wanted to be wrong about this.”

“Given the cables, I think they are planning on stealing the whole container.” Ruby said, lining them up in her scope.

Weiss gripped her sword with white knuckles. “We can’t allow that to happen, they could cause chaos with that much dust.”

Blake’s ears snapped forward, “Wait, I hear someone else.”

“Hey! What’s the holdup!” Roman Torchwick said, gusting with his hands as he descended the ramp. “We’re not exactly the most inconspicuous bunch of thieves at the moment, so why don’t you animals try to pick up the pace?”

“Wait, Torchwick and the White Fang? What’s going on here Blake?”
“I don’t know Yang, this isn’t right. The White Fang would never work with a human criminal. Adam hates his type with a passion.” Blake drew her weapon and started to stand before being pulled down by Weiss.

“Hold your horses, we can’t rush into this half cocked. The fang seem to only have a few aura users, most are normal people. Roman looks tough though, he out levels us.” They noted the cross-hair emblem next to his name, another profession they had seen around but had no clue as to its abilities.

“Out levels?” said a confused Sun. “Also you know a whole lot about White Fang operations.”

“We’ll explain later.” Yang said, wincing at their slip up. “What’s the plan Ruby?

Ruby closed her eyes in though, reopening them a few seconds later, “Yang, Sun and Blake, make your way down there and get into position, but stay out of sight. Weiss and I will stay here and provide long range support, focusing on that airship. If we can disable it, they can’t escape. I’ll cover you with Crescent Rose while you move, and Weiss will call for backup. Pop the corks and get a move on people.” Everyone signaled affirmation and the guild mates withdrew their anti-bandit potions, downing them in one sip.

“What are those?”

“Oh these? Home brewed energy drinks.” Blake said, responding to Sun.

“Cool, for a second I thought you were all taking shots.”

Yang laughed and shook her head, “That’s more our uncles thing. Lets roll!” with no further argument the trio of Sun, Blake and Yang made their way down from their position and dashed for cover.

Ruby kept eye on them via her weapons scope and nodded at her partner. Weiss typed out a message in guild chat.

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“Alright guy and gals with is it, the final round. How do you want to proceed?” Jaune looked to his team, each deep in thought. “Time is running, people.”

“I say we press our attack, keep the pressure up and hope for a critical.” Ren said, thumbing his scroll. On her perch, Xing nodded her head in agreement.

“Bold, but effective.” Jaune said.

“I say we buff this round, then attack the next. No use rushing things when we have the HP to burn.”

“Caution eh Nora? Your getting better at this.” Jaune smiled at the redhead before eyeing his partner. “and you Pyrrha?”

Pyrrha closed her eyes, considering her options. “I’m with Ren, we press the attack. Go heavy on wind and fire spells, it’s weak to both.”

“Solid option. That’s two to one for attack, so let’s do it. Ready?” The others affirmed and waited with bated breath as Jaune tapped his scroll. On the holoscreen the party stood before a dragon, the areas final boss. They smiled as their sprite based characters hurled a round of spells, striking with critical hits and reducing the bosses HP to zero. Victory flashed on the screen as gold and XP flowed like water. They’d done it.

Pyrrha leaped to her feet with a cheer, “Yes! In your face red elder dragon!”

“I have to admit, the risk payed off. Way to go Ren and Pyrrha.” Nora said, patting her partner on the back. Jaune would have done the same but Pyrrha was still hopping around in glee.

“And that’s Dead Fantasy II’s dragon dungeon in the can, well done folks. Glad to see you had fun with it.”

“I must admit, videogames are a lot more thrilling than i’d imagined as a youth. This is quite enjoyable.” Ren smiled as he spoke, looking quite relieved at their victory. Pyrrha finally settled down, resuming her spot on the floor next to her partner.
Pyrrha caught her breath and took a sip of her sports drink. “So what’s next? Do we want to continue with this game or do we want to switch series? I’m thinking Mystery of Nevermore or a few rounds of Haloid.”

The started to debate before spying something in guild chat.

[Weiss: Glynda, JNPR, Team RWBY is at the Vale docks. White Fang just arrived in force lead by Torchwick. Looks like they intend to steal several entire cargo containers of dust. Call the police. Moving to engage hostiles.]

Jaune leapt to his feet as did his team, and together they raced to change into their gear.

[Jaune: Contacting law enforcement post haste. Also gearing up, will be en route to the airdock shortly.] He looked to his partner, Pyrrha already having her scroll out and emergency services ringing.

[Glynda: I’m making my way to the bullheads as we speak. Team RWBY, delay the white fang and Torchwick until the police arrive, being mindful of collateral damage. We’ll have a discussion about why you are there once the situation arises. Exercise Caution. ]

[Ruby: Noted, Engaging.]

[Jaune: Where do you need us?]

[Glynda: Make your way to landing pad four. Direct the police directly to the Vale docks, we will meet them there. You have five minutes till dust off. I’ll inform the headmaster..]

“You heard the professor, double time!” Jaune said, halfway though donning his armor already, the rest not far behind. Five minutes? They could make it.

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It didn’t take long for Yang, Sun and Blake to reach position, just around the corner from where Torchwick was directing his goons.
[Party: Blake: In position, ready when you are.]

[Party: Ruby: Yang, Blake hit Torchwick on my signal. Tell Sun to go after the goon squad.]

[Party: Yang: What’s the signal?]

[Party: Ruby: You’ll know it when you see it.]

“What signal did you have in mind?” Weiss said to her partner.

“Fireflower” Ruby said as she took aim at the grounded bullhead. Weiss smiled, and summoned up a fire rune fire in directly in Ruby’s line of fire.

Ruby opened fire, working the bolt between shots and sending four fire-enhanced rounds directly at the bullheads main engines. Hot with fire dust’s effects they lanced clean though the armor plating, igniting the fuel lines and detonating the engines in a flash of fire and smoke.

[Party: Yang: Hot damn sis, one heck of a signal!]

The shock wave from the exploding engines threw the nearby goons around like ragdolls, and the UI registered plenty of injuries but no deaths from what the guild could see. The pilots scrambled out of the wreckage, stumbling as they went.

“The hell?!” Roman said, picking himself off the ground. He searched for the source of the attack, quickly spying Ruby and Weiss. “Is that you Red? Shouldn’t you be in bed or something by now?” He turned to to the fang, “Well don’t just stand there like a bunch of damned animals, get them!” Sneering at his insult, the fang started to take aim with their long range weapons.

They wouldn't get the chance. Breaking cover, Yang, Sun and Blake rushed into the fray. Roman noticed their assault at the last possible second, dodging Blake’s opening slash by a hair's breadth, half his cigar being sliced off. No sooner had he recovered his footing did he find himself having to parry a straight from Yang, followed by a right hook, gauntlets spewing fire and sending him further off balance. Roman was forced into a fighting retreat, desperately parrying and looking for an opportunity to counter attack as Yang and Blake laid into him, separating him from the White Fang squad.
Weiss switched to an Ice glyph as Ruby took aim at the goon squad, letting lose several ice rounds and rooting many to the ground, just as Sun smashed into the group. Staff extended he flipped into the melee, delivering spinning attacks and vicious kicks to the ice entrapped goons.

“Crap! Incoming form the air Ruby, three more bullheads!”

“What?!” Ruby said, looking to the sky. Sure enough several additional bullheads had arrived, two heading toward Yang, Sun and Blake, the other moving to the far end of the docks. The two near the melee started to unload troops.

[Party: Ruby: Incoming from the air! Watch your backs, they have reinforcements.]

[Party: Blake: Noted.]

[Ruby: Glynda, we have additional enemy airships and reinforcements, how far out are you.]

[Glynda: About to take off right now, hold tight.]

“Ruby we need to move, we are too exposed here and this is a civilian building which we cannot afford to have those bullheads fire upon. Lets redeploy to the ground, we’ll cover behind some of the cargo containers and try to flank them.”

“Right, lets book it!” Ruby said, before zipping off the roof with Weiss in hand in a shower of red and white rose petals. Thanks to Ruby’s semblance it didn’t take long for them to reach their new location.

“Alright, you stay here and see if you can peel some of the heat off Sun, I’ll go see about that other bullhead. Stay in contact with chat and try to coordinate with the others.”

“Right!” Weiss said, summoning up some glyphs to jump off, heading toward the high ground as Ruby once again vanished in a cloud of petals, heading for the far side of the docks.
Blake and Yang had not let up on their assault despite exchanging chat, keeping Roman off balance with an endless rain of blows, slashes, and point blank gauntlet blasts. Despite the pressure, Roman was all smiles at the sight of his reinforcements, already moving to attack the huntsmen's rear. He was parrying blows with his cane while firing off shots which Blake and Yang were dodging with well practiced grace born from dozens of hours of grimm combat together.

[Party: Yang: Sun needs help, can you handle Roman?]

[Party: Blake: Go, I have some ideas]

Yang dashed into Roman with a rolling combination of punches that would make a prize fighter proud before double firing her gauntlets at his feet, tossing him around and rocketing herself back toward the melee that was occupying Sun. Blake capitalized, rushing down Roman before he could recover and launching into a series of clone fakes and lightning fast strikes, which to her frustration Roman was handling with far more skill than she’d figured for a common thug.

“Just you and me now, kitty. Seems like the bitch who tore up Juniors place has left you out to dry.”

“I think i’m more than capable of handling scum like you.” Blake said as she launched another series of strikes.

Roman parried them with ease, regaining some of his footing. “Heh, you’d be surprised kid” He ignored a clone faint to focus on Blake's main body.

“Funny, was about to say the same thing. The ignored clone detonated in a concussive blast of wind dust, the shock wave dazing Roman who had his back turned to it. Blake wasted no time, landing several blows and taking off another chunk of Roman’s HP pool.

“Gah” Roman said, firing at the ground to give himself some space. “Nasty semblance for an animal like you”\

Blake scrawled at the insult and launched into a new series of attacks. As they clashed, Roman’s HP continued to drop as a steady pace, though Blake hadn’t escaped harm herself, Roman proving
to be far better at facing one attacker than the previous two and landing several keen blows. Her enhancement enhanced agility and aura pool had mitigated his attacks somewhat.

[Glynda: We are in the air, Police are en route as well.]

[Ruby: main fighting is at the north side of the docks. I’m en route to deal with a rogue bullhead at the south side.]

[Glynda: noted, I'll direct the police to the main fight. JNPR will assist at the south]

[Ruby: Rodger]

Blake’s ears had caught the sound of distant sirens, which caused her to smirk. Between the police and their own reinforcements, It was just a matter of time now.

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Yang entered the fray with a blast powered flying right straight to an goon that blasted his aura HP pool by two thirds and sent him flying into a comrade, taking the non aura user out of the fight instantly. “Thought you could use a hand Sun”

“And anything else you got” Sun said, blocking a sword swipe with his staff while taking another goon out with a spinning kick.

“Oh, I got more than they can handle” Yang replied, sending shots at a ranged attacker while laying a melee goon out with an uppercut. The two blondes danced and weaved through the crowd, Yang focusing her fury on the aura users while Sun unknowingly focused on the remaining mundane goons.

“Got any plans for those airships?” Sun said, ducking a strike and following up with a round smash.

[Party: Weiss: In position, stand by. For assistance Yang”]

Yang smiled, “Always”
Weiss took stock of the fray below. The White fang hadn’t noticed her new position, nor from the ground or the air, but it was just a matter of time. Sun and Yang were handling themselves well, but we're slowly being overwhelmed. More concerning was the aircraft however, whose armaments could turn the fight if brought to bare. Something had to be done, and as she watched them circle, searching for a firing solution that wouldn't take out their own, Weiss had an idea.

“Come on, one more pass…” Weiss said to herself, spinning her dust chamber to ice and waiting for the bullheads to be in position. As the bullheads cam back around, one started to pass over the top of the other. “Now!” Weiss summoned up as many ice glyphs as she could muster and took aim at the bullhead on top.. The hailstorm of ice struck the bullhead head on, encasing it’s cockpit windscreen and wings in a thick coating of ice. Blinded and flaps stuck, the bullhead pitched down, scraping along the top of the one below in a shower of sparks.

The damage was more than Weiss had hoped for. The lower bullhead’s top panels were ripped to shreds, hydraulic fluid and fuel spilling spraying into the air and it’s turbine stalling out. Weiss quickly summoned up some lightning glyphs and let lose a barrage of ball lightning that set the spraying fuel aflame and fried the bullheads avionics. The craft went down hard, directly in the path of Blake and Roman.

[Party: Weiss: Heads up Blake, crashing bullhead coming your way].

The iced up bullhead fared little better. Flight controls stuck and blinded it was also showing signs of damage, though less than it’s partner. The crew were attempting to save it however, and were clearly attempting an emergency landing on the north end of the docks. IT was effectively out of the fight.

“And that’s that.” Weiss said, admiring her work. Aware of her now exposed position she turned to the melee below. “Next up, time to deal with that goon squad.”

[Party: Weiss: Airships dealt with, moving to support Sun and Yang.]

[Party: Yang: Let em have it, Weiss!]

“Hmm, as if I that needed saying” Weiss said, calling up some gravity glyphs, and zipping down
into the fight below in a burst of speed.

“Nice of your to join of Weiss.” Yang blocked a body blow and counter punched the goon, knocking him senseless. Yang winced at the way his hp cratered, the guy obviously wasn’t a trained fighter. “And nice work with those bullheads.”

Weiss disarmed one goon with a flurry of slashes before taking several others out with a flash of lightning dust. “My apologies on being fashionably late, other matters to attend to and so on.”

Yang headbutted her opponent and blasted another point blank, sending the mid leveled fighter to the ground. “Always the aristocrat, Weiss.”

“You ladies got this? I’ll go help Blake if so.”

“Go for it Sun, We got this in the bag.” Yang said with a smile. Nodding Sun pole vaulted over a few bewildered Fang goons, leaving them open to a strike by Weiss, and took off toward the clash between Blake and Roman.

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Blake was slowly being pushed back. Aware of her clones danger Roman was avoiding them at all costs, while upping the intensity of his own attacks. Unlike Blake Roman cared nothing for property damage, and willfully shot at walls, containers, anything he could to push the her back.

[Party: Weiss: Heads up Blake, crashing bullhead coming your way].

Roman smirked as Blake looked to the sky and dodged backwards. “Running eh? Suppose you don’t want to waste any more of your nine lives, eh kitty…” Roman’s diss was cut as he noted just where Blake had been looking.

“Shi..” was all he got off before throwing himself backwards, just in time to miss being crushed by the crashing bullhead. As it crashed it spewed fire and shrapnel everywhere as it cartwheeled across the docks and fell into the sea. Blake noted with approval that while battled and half dead, the crew had survived and seemed to be trying to bail. Weiss warning had spared her, and Blake looked with approval that Roman had not fared as well. His aura had taken a major hit from the flying debris, and he was struggling to pick himself up.
“Well done Weiss.” Blake said as she made her way through the debris back toward the recovering Roman.

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Ruby peeked around the corner of a cargo container, observing the Fang goons beyond. They had scrambled to hook up a container, landing practically on top of it and by the looks of it were nearly finished in their task. The airships engines were already spinning to life in prep for take off, meaning Ruby had to act now or risk losing the container.

“Think Ruby, you get one shot at this.” Ruby looked around and located a cargo crane just above the Bullhead. “Perfect” She said, making her way up as silently as she could.

One of the goons below shouted orders. “Everyone back aboard, last tow cable is in place. Let’s get this thing back to Adam before the fuzz or SDC thugs show up.” ‘So Adam is aware of this operation, good to know.’ The fang quickly piled aboard and the engines roared, the bullhead slowly lifting off.

“It’s now or never” Ruby said as she did a shot assisted flying leap off the crane, landing on top of the rising bullhead. She struggled to maintain her balance as the airship gained altitude, preparing maneuvers for it’s escape. Ruby ran along the wings with Crescent Rose in warscythe mode, slashing at the wings before shifting back into scythe mode and planting her curved blade into the main fuselage. Holding onto her weapon as the aircraft spun, Ruby unloaded several gravity dust rounds at point blank range into the main intake, and was rewarded with the sounds of the turbine tearing itself to pieces and the aircraft losing power.

Ruby ripped her weapon free and leapt off the bullhead just as it struck ground, the container grinding into the pavement with a hail of sparks but thankfully not exploding. Firing a shot downward to slow herself Ruby hit the ground and fell into a roll, standing up just in time to see the bullhead doors open and the White Fang goons disembark, murder in their eyes. Ruby readied herself to charge them before they could organize an attack.

They wouldn’t get the chance. A second before Ruby charged the bullhead was lit up with a shower of grenades care of Nora who was firing out the open hull door of a Beacon marked bullhead. JNPR and Glynda had arrived at last.

Ruby smiled wide as Nora and Ren leapt down to join her. “Hiyas Ruby.” Said Nora, her rocket
boots firing just as she landed to soften her fall. Ren landed in a neat stance right beside her.

“Nice to see you two.” Ruby said as she returned the greeting.

Ren assumed his normal stance, guns facing the recovering goon squad. “Looks like you’ve had an interesting evening.”

“You could say that. Shall we?”

Nora lowered her goggles into place. “It would be our pleasure.” Without further delay the trio charged at the White fang, who stood little chance against three trained huntsmen. A few of the braver ones put up a fight while others threw down their arms an attempted to flee. It would only take a few minutes before all of them were down for the count.

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Roman took stock of the situation as he recovered his footing and patted out a few flames on his jacket. “Animals in disarray, or rides smashed up and couple of dames that hit like a freight train. Can’t say I like how my night is going”. He noticed Blake being joined by a monkey Faunus. “Oh and look, a wild ape joins the party. Think it’s time I make my exit.” Shooting a overhanging container to provide cover Roman ran for the last of the bullheads, whose Faunus crew were desperately trying to clear off enough ice to get airborne. He hoped they would be ready by the time he got there.

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The beacon airship swung low, Jaune, Pyrrha and a casually dressed Glynda leaping down and joining Weiss and Yang in the fight just as the police showed up in force along the main road. Jaune hit the ground rolling and immediately shield bashed one goon before running to cover Yangs flank. Pyrrha danced through the melee with awe inspiring grace, attacking with spear and shield, brushing aside White Fang attacks with ease as she went to support Weiss. Seeing the odds further turn against them, and noting the presence of the police, the White Fang’s morale was shattered, only the most fanatical continuing to fight in vain. Others broke and run, or threw down their arms and surrendered.

Seeing that the students had things under control, Glynda looked around for Roman Torchwick, spying him making a dash for a bullhead, the crew waving him onward while being pursued by Blake and a Faunus Glynda’s UI registered as Sun Wukong, having seen his student record.
Glynda ran to support the duo, using her semblance to grab several large pieces of debris and hurling them with all her might at the remaining bullhead. The force of the impacts broke the airship’s tail section clean away, off balancing the aircraft and causing its nose to smash into the ground.

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Roman watched the bullhead break apart and cursed, Roman reaching for his scroll and pressing an icon. “Well crap, I suppose it’s time for plan N.” Roman fired a few more dust rounds the buildings and grounds behind him before dashing toward the warehouse area of the dock, abandoning the White Fang to their fate.

[Glynda: maintain pursuit Ms Belladonna. I’ll handle the bullhead crew.]

[Blake: Affirmative.]

Blake and Sun ran as fast as their legs could carry them, Blake the faster of the two. She was quickly gaining on Roman with every stride and due to her outfits enchantments and wasn’t feeling winded in the least. As he ran Roman fired backwards blindly, sending dust rounds into the alleyways, buildings, anything he could to try to throw obstacles between himself and the pursuing huntsmen. Blake was tempted to return fire but was hesitant due to collateral damage.

Roman rounded a corner and broke line of sight as Blake and Sun closed to within a handful of meters. But where they expected to find an alley way they found nothing but a wall, Roman seemingly having vanished into it.

“What the heck? Where did he go?” Sun said, looking for a door or other entry way. “Did we overshoot him?”

“Not possible, he turned here I’m sure of it.” Blake reached out and touched the wall, her eyes widening. “No way..”

“Huh?” Sun said, before the duo noticed a glow of pink light from beyond the wall. “What is that?”
“It can’t be.” Blake concentrated as she pressed a hand against the surface of the wall and concentrated, the wall shattering like a mirror and revealing the space beyond.

“Okay what the heck is that?” Sun said, pointing to a swirling circle of pink energy on the ground some 10 meters hence.

“No, no no..” Blake said as she ran toward it, the portal vanishing a moment before she was on top of it. Blake’s eyes widened as she recognized the magic, despite never having used this particular spell. “This...this is bad.”

Sun ran to the end of the alleyway, finding no trace of Roman. “I don’t see any trace of him, you?”

“Nothing, the footprints stop here.” Blake said, looking at the ground and noticing two sets of tracks in the wet pavement. One was around Romans size, the other was much smaller.

“What’s going on here? We had him!” Sun said, kicking a trash can. Blake ran her fingers across the ground, hairs standing up on her knuckles from the residual energies.

“Nothing good, that’s for sure. “ Blake said, looking around for anything else out of the ordinary. “I think we lost him, lets head back and regroup with the others.”

“Guess we have no choice. Come on.” Sun said as he started back. Blake followed after one last look at the alley way. The guild wasn’t going to like this.

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Teams RWBY, JNPR and with Sun sat upon some crates, watching as the Vale police lead gangs of cuffed and restrained White Fang into police transports. Other police were combing the area, gathering evidence and taking stock of the damage and losses incurred in the fighting.

Glynda thanked a Detective before turning and walking toward the assembled students. “Mr. Wukong, the police could use some help loading the prisoners, if you could please lend them your assistance. “ Glynda’s look gave the distinct impression this wasn’t a request.
“Okay, on it. See ya later Blake, ladies.” Sun said, waving goodbye before jogging over to where the prisoners were being loaded.

“JNPR, if you could assist with the sweep of the docks that would be helpful. We still have some White Fang unaccounted for and they may be hiding nearby.”

“Right...right.” Jaune knew a polite dismissal when he heard one, “Pyrrha and I will assist at the north end of the docks, Ren and Nora you take the south end.”

[Jaune to Ruby: Good luck, catch you later.]

Team JNPR said their goodbyes and departed, the team separating to their assigned locations. Alone on the creates, team RWBY couldn’t hide their nervousness.

“Professor, thank you for the assistance tonight…” Glynda raided a finger, cutting Ruby off.

“I have some concerns about this evening, if would be so kind Ms. Rose.”

“Okay, shoot?” Ruby said.

“First off, is everyone okay?”

“There were no casualties on our side, if that is what you mean.” Ruby said, “We took a few hits, but nothing our aura couldn’t handle.”

“Excellent to hear, Ms Rose. Remember always your first duty if to your team and their well being.”

“Of course.” Ruby said with a smile.

“Now, I have to ask how you came to even be here this evening. Given you had time to prepare supplies, outfits and have another team on standby I take it you were aware of the mission far longer than one would think given the SDC only posted it very recently. A mission request of
particular oddity, given it was submitted, approved, and accepted by Vale and assigned to a Beacon

team all without input or clearance from Beacon, or even notification.”

“We received a tip about the cargo from a source, and notified the SDC of said tip. The mission

was created to allow us to investigate.” Weiss said, matter of factually.

“I see. “ Glynda said, “And why was Beacon not informed in that case?”

“That...would appear to be a flaw in the chain of communication.”

“Hmm, or perhaps it was intentional, to ensure your team’s claiming of the mission would go

unchallenged. Either way, what’s done is done in that regard. In the end you performed the

mission about as well as could be expected given the events spiraled out of control, and you sought

out aid and notified law enforcement as soon as criminal elements arrived on scene. For that you

are commended.” Team RWBY was all smiles at Glynda’s praise.

“However.” Glynda continued, making RWBY pause in their revelry. “As huntresses of Beacon, a

certain standard of candor and behavior is expected of you. Given your particular abilities, special

considerations must be undertaken before any action you commit yourself to. Tell me, do you

think you acted in accordance with Beacon’s expectations?”

“I’m not sure I understand the question Professor, We accomplished the mission, bad guys

captured, Dust protected. Seems like expectations were met to me. All despite a far larger force

then expected showing up”

“I’m not referring to your conduct during the battle Ms. Xiao Long. My issue is how you acted

before the mission’s commencement.” Team RWBY looked rather confused at the question.

Glynda sat down beside them and removed her glasses.

“You ignored or sidestepped the normal protocols that exist for a criminal investigation, or even

for mission assignment and review. Though you achieved a victory tonight, you did so at

considerable risk to life and property, risks that could have been mitigated had we been aware of

the mission or proper coordination with either law enforcement or Beacon been established. Was

there a reason why ether you or the SDC didn’t engage us on this matter?

“There was a fear that the knowledge we were there could have leaked, or at least the knowledge

that the shipment was being watched.”
“A legitimate concern, Ms Belladonna. However you do not believe that Beacon would have leaked that information, do you?”

“Well no…”

“Than you agree that we could have been trusted with this?”

“Yes.” Ruby said, eyes downcast. “It was our mistake not to contact you on this matter, or at least give you a heads up.”

“We are guild mates, Ms Rose. We’ve fought alongside each other, risk our lives together. You need not fear taking legitimate concerns to us as we will give them all due consideration. The rules exist to insulate you from potential fallout from a mission as well as to help ensure your team’s safety and prevent you from getting too far over your head. I cannot guarantee you would have been sanctioned as is, nor promise the mission would have remained in your hands, but the mission objectives would have been met. All would depend on the intelligence at hand and what resources were deemed best to accomplish the mission. More importantly, the rules also serve to protect Vale and our relationship with them, as there is a very fine line between Duty and vigilantism. Vale has no tolerance for the later, nor does Beacon. Do you understand what I am trying to say?”

“Yeah, I think we are on the same page.”

“Good to hear Ms. Xiao Long. As it stands you have potentially picked a fight with a violent criminal element, rather two in this case wither you wished for that outcome or not. Roman Torchwick is still at large and If you were not known to our adversaries before, you most certainly are now and we may not be able to protect you if we are not even aware you are in danger until after the fact.”

Blake clinched her fist. “Professor Goodwitch is right, this will most certainly make it’s way back to the White Fang leadership as well as whomever could make them work with criminal scum like Torchwick. The White Fang don’t have access to the funds needed to pull this off, let alone the equipment. Someone has to be directing them, someone who is more powerful than their prejudices.”

“Actors who are at present, unknown to all.” Glynda added. “If Roman had been captured, we may have been able to interrogate him on that subject.
“He didn’t escape by himself, we had him dead to rights. Someone helped him flee, someone who well, was like me.”

Blake had Glynda’s full attention, as well as everyone else’s. “Elaborate, Ms Belladonna”.

“They had abilities like mine. I thought it was just semblance at first, but there was something more, something that only one like myself would recognize.” Glynda knew what that meant: Someone with access to illusion magic.

“Do you have any idea who that person may be? Could it have been Roman himself?”

“I don’t think so, if he had it he would have used it earlier. I noticed a second set of footprints in the alleyway once we the illusion shattered. He wasn’t alone, I’m sure of it.”

“Ms. Rose?”

“News to me, the only people I know about are the ones we all know about.”

Yang looked pale at the implication. “So Ruby isn’t alone in this, and worse off, that someone is working with Torchwick.”

“And by extension the White Fang. We have to find out who this is.” added Weiss.

“It is gravely concerning, no doubt.” Glynda said, eyeing the group, “But leave that in the hands of Professor Ozpin and I for the time being.”

“But…”

“No buts, Ms Rose. Such an investigation may require immense resources and careful execution. If your abilities or those of Team JNPR are required we will bring you in. On that note, as of now you are barred from taking any SDC requested missions or any independent actions in this investigation without prior approval of myself or Professor Ozpin.”
“You’re shutting us down?!”

“We are ensuring you do not act without our knowledge, Ms Belladonna. If you wish to continue this investigation, it will be done by the book for your safety and for Vales. Given your background Ms. Belladonna, which I assure you we are well aware of,” Glynda said, Blake's ears standing on in at the implication, “I would request you brief Professor Ozpin and myself on what particulars you believe may aid in this matter. With that knowledge, we may be able to ascertain our opponents next moves and plan accordingly.”

“You want me to be an informant?”

“What you say will remain in confidence, and you will not be named in any official manner. We are quite good at keeping a secret, after all.”

[Glynda to Blake: After all, the very existence of the guild is kept a secret. We know the dangers you would face should you speak to us, we will not betray that trust.]

“I’ll...think about it.” To say she was hesitant would be an understatement. It would mean selling out everyone she’d ever known.

“That is all I ask, Ms Belladonna.” Glynda refocused on the team as a whole. “We are in this together Team RWBY, as residents of Vale, of Beacon, and as guildmates. Do not attempt to go at this alone when we stand ready and able to assist. Prove to us that continuing this relationship is beneficial to all sides and we will do all we can to aid in this endeavor.”

“So play by the rules, and together we get to the bottom of this?”

“Exactly, Ms. Rose.”

Team RWBY shared a look, each affirming the plan. “Alright, I think we can work with that.”

“Good to hear, Ruby.” Glynda said, smiling for the first time to night. “Expect a call to debrief in full tomorrow afternoon. We will dust off for our return to Beacon in one hour. In the meantime, divide your team accordingly and go help JNPR with their duties. Ms. Belladonna I would ask you to accompany me to Torchwick’s last known location, I want to examine what you discovered in person.” With that Glynda walked a short distance away, leaving Team RWBY to themselves for a
Ruby faced her teammates, “Well gang, not the way I thought this would turn out, but here we are. Weiss you head after Jaune and Pyrrha. Yang go help Ren and Nora. I’ll go with Blake and Glynda, if the M-word is at play here, I want to see it for myself.”

“I still think this is a win, not to mention Weiss owes us dinner now.” Yang said, anger still apparent on her face from the lecture as it was. Nonetheless she complied, and went off toward her assignment.

“I’m with Yang on both counts, a victory is a victory. We should take pride in that.” She nodded and strode in the direction of Jaune and Pyrrha.

“You okay, Blake?” Ruby said, arm around her teammate and friend. “I know tonight had to have been hard.”

“I’ll...be fine. I just need some time to process all this.” She stood, taking a few steps toward the waiting Glynda. “But thanks for the concern, it means a lot to me. Lets go wrap things up, I want to examine that alleyway more before any evidence evaporates. “

“Right, let’s be off then.” Ruby kept an arm around Blake as they lead Glynda toward Roman’s last location.

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“Are you positive, Glynda?” Ozpin had met with Glynda and the students the moment they returned to Beacon. The students were dismissed to their dorms while Glynda had joined him in his office for a brief rundown of the nights events.

“Positive. Though it was not the school of magic for which Ms. Rose and I are practitioners, the alleyway teemed with leftover magical energy, the same energy welded by Ms Belladonna. Anything on the Docks CCTV?”
Ozpin leaned back in his chair. “There were no surveillance camera in that area, none functional at least. Torchwick must have chosen that location precisely for that reason. He clearly doesn’t want the identity of this accomplice to be known.”

“A trump card kept close to the chest or perhaps an asset too valuable to risk in the open? He’s not utilized this asset in the past, it must have been quite dire a situation to reveal them, even at this limited capacity.”

“True. “ Ozpin said, taking a sip of decaffeinated coffee. “Or perhaps only the first time we’ve noticed him utilizing said asset. I’ll have contacts look into his past capers and list of known accomplices, perhaps that will narrow down the list of suspects or reveal a pattern.”

“Let us hope so.” Glynda said.

“What of the White Fang?”

“Low level goons for the most part, level ranges below that of even Signal students. Most lacked aura altogether, being little more than armed civilians. The police are currently processing them, as well as investigating the source of the bullheads and weapons.”

“Clearly they have obtained a source of significant funding, yet another thing to investigate through a matter best left to the police for now.”

“I did reach out to Ms Belladonna, but we’ll have to wait and see how forthcoming she will be. I also messaged Qrow and Taiyang about the night’s events, both had rather colorful responses. Taiyang will deal with his daughters and keep an eye out around Vale for our magic using suspect. He’s had the most experience outside yourself dealing with magic, and may be able to recognize it in use if he stumbled across it.”

“And Qrow?”

[Qrow to Glynda: Tell the old man I’ve got his book, the seller in Mistral panned out. As for you know who, She’s definitely got active agents, more on that in person, I don’t feel comfortable talking about it here, not if we don’t know who is able to read these things.] Glynda relayed his message to Ozpin.
Ozpin took a sip and considered his options. “Ask Qrow to return at once. While I’m concerned about Salem’s movements I have a greater need for his skills here. I need another set of eyes on this, and it’s time we upped the guilds training efforts. If we aren’t alone in this, they need to be ready for all contingencies.” Glynda relaid Ozpin’s orders to Qrow.

[Qrow to Glynda: coming home to roost eh? It will take me a week, but I’ll start your way in the morning. Keep a close eye on my nieces in the meantime, I don’t want them searching for this other magic user on their own.]

[Glynda to Qrow: I will, of that you can be assured.]

[Qrow to Glynda: and hey, don’t be so harsh on them. We did far worse as kids ourselves.]

[Glynda to Qrow: That’s precisely what I want to avoid, Qrow.]

“It will take him a week, but he’s on his way.”

Ozpin nodded and brought up his holoscreen. He had a lot of messages to draft tonight for dispatch to contacts in Vale. “I’ll handle things from here Glynda, you get some sleep. We’ll debrief the students in full tomorrow and decide our next course of action from there.”

“Oh understood.” Glynda said, standing up and popping her neck. “I’ll set up the meeting for tomorrow morning. Till then, try not to work too late, You need some sleep yourself Ozpin.”

“I’ll be quick, don’t you worry. Goodnight Glynda.”

“Headmaster” she said before turning to leave. Ozpin’s calm facade fell as soon as Glynda departed. He knew some links had to exist between recent events. The attack on Amber, the rash of dust robberies, the surge in White Fang activity, and now the existence of magic users outside of the guild and the maidens.

The last one concerned him the most. Magic was a dangerous thing, in the hands of a criminal even more so. Ozpin had to know the source, he had to know why magic had returned to Remnant, and why it was different from the magic of the ancient past. The system the guild used was impossibly complex, well beyond anything he’d ever experienced and constantly monitored by someone or something given the armor and weapons gifted to the guild as well as it’s
communications subsystems. He was now more than ever tempted to ask for guild membership, but still hesitant given his unique background and his own magical abilities, though greatly reduced in the current age. He feared Salem’s involvement in the matter, but knew she would never surrender any of her powers to another.

Ozpin sighed and continued to type out messages, calling in old favors and requesting details on investigations he was privy to. He hoped Kaspars journal would be of help and aid him in tracking down the one whom he believed may be able to shed some light on the issue. If not for the missing spring maiden, he’d take a more direct approach, though that would have to be a last resort. It would take time to uncover the truth of the matter, Ozpin just prayed it was time he had to spare.

Authors notes:

Glynda may sound rather harsh here, but it's best to read it as 'disappointed parent' rather then 'completely livid.' I took the rare step of updating the scene to better fit the tone I was shooting for and to avoid confusion. Actions do not exist in a vacuum, and the events will have repercussions down the road. Canon seemed content to basically hand wave away consequences till recently, but some upcoming plot actually revolves around the fallout from here, as well as fallout from several previous events.
Chapter 16

"Signal just hasn't been the same without you Qrow. " Taiyang said while handing a cup of coffee to his his teammate turned former brother in law. "The students keep asking about you."

Qrow accepted the mug with thanks and took a sip, the black coffee doing wonders for his hangover. "Can't say I don't miss it Tai, but things are getting weird out there. Things are in motion I can feel it, but nailing it all down has been a real chore. As much as the students miss me, they need me more out there than they do in a class."

"I'm sure they would disagree, two in particular." Taiyang smiled, "Though it is nice now having to steam clean the scent of old booze out of the carpet on a weekly basis."

"Oh ha ha" Qrow said with mock offense, "Though you're probably right, old man janitor had been giving me some real side eye over the years. He was looking practically thrilled at the office going away party." Old man janitor had partied with particular gusto, and seemed uncaring about the fact he was the one set to clean up afterwards.

"So where are the munchkins anyways? Figured they would be all over me given I've been away for a while."

Taiyang relaxed in his chair, "They have been rather sparse as of late. Ruby's, well she's Ruby. Social interaction has never been her strong suit, and since her lessons at Signal have kicked into high gear she's even rarer a sight. If she's not at school she's off training or isolated in her room doing who knows what."

"Ruby still doing that thing with the levels and what not?"

Taiyang nodded, "Sure enough. It's actually gotten worse as of late, more detailed. More than a few times I've caught glimpse of her categorizing everyone in class in that notebook of hers. " Taiyang thumbs toward the nearby refrigerator, "Though she leaves that one out for us along with all those drawings of hers."

Qrow examined the refrigerator door and it's myriad collection of drawings. Sketches of her new weapon were common, as were the familiar images of the winged huntress Ruby had been going on about for years now. There was a new drawing of some sort of skull masked figure that Qrow thought looked like a scarier version of the grimm reaper of old, as well as a dry erase board with the family's names listed. Each name sported a small icon and a number Ruby claimed represented their levels.

"Always the active imagination that one. Though I'll give her credit for one thing: she's got our levels right."

Taiyang pffted, "As if your higher level than me Qrow."

Qrow chuckled, "Take it up with Ruby not me. I'm just giving credit where it's due". Taiyang joined in on the merriment. "So if Ruby's off doing her usual where is firecracker?"

Taiyang shrugged, "That's the thing; she's been inseparable from her sister the last month or so. They race home from school and it's off to train. I figured it was just Ruby trying to leech off her sisters lessons but something tells me it's more than that. They don't object when I offer to teach some additional lessons to them but they seem to always be holding back. Ruby's been like that since she started but this is new for Yang."
"Hmm" Qrow said taking another drink. "One thing to hide progress form a classmate or tournament opponent but from us? I wonder what's up."

"Suppose you can ask them yourself." Taiyang gestured toward the front room where the sounds of the door opening could be heard as well as the muted conversation of the two sisters.

"Well speak of the grimm, about time you ladies made an appearance."

"Uncle Qrow!" The girls shouted as they raced to their uncles side, enveloping him in hugs and rapid questions about where he was and how he was doing and if he missed them.

"Alright alright slow down, more than enough Qrow to go around." The girls grabbed some juice and joined him and their father at the table. Both were visibly sweating.

Qrow filled them in on his travels, careful not to mention any obvious secrets or dancing around specifics were needed. Taiyang looked less than pleased, but understood as he didn't want the girls dragged into Qrows 'business' at their age. He'd lost family to that already.

Following up and Taiyang's advice, Qrow decided the tackle the gargantua in the room. "But enough about how, how have things been with you two? Your pops here says you two have been thick as thieves lately, so as little he sees you. Anything exciting going on?"

Ruby and Yang nearly dropped their glasses before catching themselves. Yang and Ruby faced each other, their emotions playing out on their faces while they silently guestured. Qrow had seen plenty of silent sibling conversations but this one took the cake. It was almost like they were actually chatting though neither had a semblance that would allow such a thing.

After a minute of awkward silence, the two nodded have reached some silent agreement. "So ah, well there is something we have to tell you." Ruby said, with obvious hesitation. "Yang and I have been keeping a secret of sorts, It's pretty serious stuff."

"You girls can trust us with anything, don't be afraid." Taiyang was prepared for anything, though he knew neither was dating anyone so the big one was unlikely to drop.

"It's kind of hard to explain, really." Ruby said with a fidget. "I mean we made slides but..."

"It's more a show rather than tell sort of thing." Yang added, hand on her sisters. That got the two men's attention. Something they had to see to believe was quite out of the ordinary in the huntsmen world. Semblances could be wild or exotic in practice which tempered huntsman's expectations. If the girls thought it was unbelievable that was cause for concern to the two veterans.

"Well, I'm all up for a demonstration if that's what needed. Taiyang?"

"Right behind you Qrow, lead the way girls." The sisters shared a breath and got to their feet, Yang leading the family out of the house and to the training yard a short walk away.

The clearing which served as the family's training yard was nearby but isolated from any prying eyes, something Qrow and Taiyang noted. Whatever this was the girls didn't want the neighbors to know about it. There was another even more isolated training ground beyond the villages defenses but the girls knew not to go there without permission due to the occasional grimm wandering in.

The yard had clearly seen better days. Training dummies and targets were sliced up and blasted apart as were several of the rocks and boulders in the area. The girls had obviously been going at the place hard, Taiyang wincing at the costs of the replacement targets he was sure to have to order soon. More curious was the damage that didn't seem to match the girls fighting styles with some
areas showing signs of fire and ice damage.

Ruby and Yang turned to face their father and uncle. Ruby took a deep breath to calm her nerves and started to speak.

"You remember how I told you that when Dwayna unlocked my aura she gave me a second gift as well?"

Taiyang smiled, "You may have mentioned that a time or two, yes." 'More like every week for the last few years, but who's counting.' he thought to himself.

"Well I've kind of figured out what it does.' Ruby began to pace. "I mean, I've been piecing it together for a while, it's shown up in chunks here and there. But lately it's become quite the thing. A scary, mind blowing thing."

"Go on, we're listening." Qrow said, already reaching for his flask. He had a feeling he'd need it with the way this was going.

"As things got scarier I finally hit a point where I couldn't keep it all in. I broke down and finally told Yang and she's been helping me with it."

"I've done what I could and believe me when I say I am way over my head here." Yang said. "We've been debating how to tell you two, and with Uncle Qrow finally back we figure we can kill two birds with one stone." Qrow snickered at the unintentional pun.

"Girls, what's going on?" Taiyang was growing more and more concerned. He was running through scenarios, but little of what he could think of would require these grounds of all places to tell him about. Both of his daughters already had them semblances unlocked so it couldn't be that.

"It's nothing bad!" Ruby said waving her arms frantically, 'It's just...weird. Weird and confusing and completely awesome. But it's too weird for me and Yang to handle alone anymore. We need your help to help us understand it and to help us know what to do next."

"Well lay it on us. Your old man and I have seen quite a bit in our lives I'm sure we can handle whatever this is."

Yang raised an eyebrow, "You sure about that uncle Qrow? I don't want you two to freak out on me here."

"I'm sure firecracker. Takes a lot to surprise your Dad and I." Qrow uncapped his flask.

"First time for everything then I guess. Ruby, give them a demonstration."

"Okay then, here goes." Ruby turned about and faced the targets downrange. Taiyang and Qrow looked to the targets and Qrow raised the flask to take a sip. Both missed Yang's growing grin.

Ruby unholstered Crescent Rose with one hand, her new weapon shifting into scythe mode. The family watched as Ruby raised her free hand toward the targets and closed her eyes.

And then hell broke loose. Green fire enveloped Ruby's arm as a vortex of shadows crashed down upon the training yard, sucking the heat from the air around them and darkening the local area. The shadows tore into the remaining target dummies, shredding several before the vortex vanished a few seconds later. The grounds were covered in a dark colored frost that seemed to eat away at the surrounding light.
Ruby lowered her hand and turned to face her family. Qrow looked dumbfounded, his mouth open in shock and whiskey pouring out of his flask and onto the ground before him. Taiyang was white as a ghost, eyes open wide in fear.

"Well damn, I stand corrected sport." Qrow said.

"No..." Taiyang said, "Oh gods no. Please tell me that's not..."

Qrow shook his head, "It's not Tai, it's impossible. Three are accounted for and the last has no reason to even know Ruby exists. It can't be that."

"What are you guys talking about?" Yang asked.

"Nothing Yang, it's nothing. Ruby love what's going on?" Taiyang was at his daughter side in an instant. He stared into his youngest's softly glowing silver eyes, frantically searching them for some confirmation of what Qrow had claimed, for some answer.

"I told you, it's the gift Dwayna gave me. Or at least part of it, I can do a lot more than that."

Taiyang's fears and disbelief still painted his features. "Ruby that was...well..."

"It was magic." Qrow said, having walked past the father daughter duo to examine the remains of the training area. "Honest to gods actual magic. I'm not sure how this is even possible but the proof is undeniable." Qrow knew it's signs intimately not that his nieces knew that. Neither Oz nor the maidens had powers like that.

Yang nodded, "We figured as such though it's nice to have confirmation uncle Qrow. You can see why this is a bit over my pay grade."

"Dwayna did this? How? Why? And why you?" Taiyang said, holding onto his youngest daughter.

"Actually Dad, it's not just Ruby." Yang said, walking past them to join Qrow. Readying her gauntlets Yang roared as fire enveloped her gauntlets, the furious blonde huntress firing off massive shot into the ground before sparking a trail of flaming destruction that raced toward a bolder on the far side of the grounds and shattered it like a clay pot.

"What the hell firecracker?!" Qrow said with eyes wide.

"Ruby, explain." Tai said, looking away from the destruction his elder daughter had wrought.

"The gift it seems can be transferred. Just like Dwayna unlocked it in me I was able to unlock it in Yang. It's different though for each person, I think that's what the little icons are all about."

"Icons?" Qrow said, still marveling at the destruction he'd witnessed.

"The things by your names on the fridge whiteboard." Yang said. "I see them as well now, Ruby wasn't just imagining them. Names, portraits, levels, it's all there. Not to mention a whole lot more."

Taiyang shook his head, trying to gather his thoughts. "What do you mean you see them? See them how? How exactly did you unlock whatever this is in Yang?"

"Well, I sent her an invite." Ruby said matter of fact like, "Only figured out how to do that last month. I've been seeing more and more options as time has gone by actually. Early on it was just little stuff but it's getting more and more elaborate and well, here we are." Ruby guestered to the
destroyed training grounds.

"And the magic ties into this how?" Taiyang said.

"It seems to be part of the same overall system. I've only been trying to make sense of this for a month, Ruby's been dealing with it for years now." Yang added.

"Though the attack stuff is all pretty new only really started seeing those when I started training with actual huntsmen weapons. Well it was there before that with the training weapons but not as clear, or intuitive." Ruby could feel the energy flowing through Crescent Rose and into her. "I think it has something to do with how real huntsmen weapons channel aura unlike the practice ones."

"Wait" Qrow said, "You mentioned a system? What system?"

The sisters shared another look and nodded to each other. "Here." Ruby said, waving her hand in the air. "Let me just show you. I apologize for the name by the way, I didn't know I couldn't change a guild name when I selected it."

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Ozpin nodded and took a sip of coffee. Qrow, Glynda and Ozpin were in his office at Beacon, formally debriefing Qrow on his mission and the history of guild from his perspective.

"I must say I'm glad she chose a better name the second go around." Glynda said with a smile. Qrow's nameplate listed him as Qrow Branwen [RUBY], short for 'Ruby's Awesome Guild'.

"Forteen year olds aren't known for creativity." Qrow said with a laugh which the others shared.

"Anyhow, after Ruby unlocked the professions in Tai and myself she gave us a few other 'demonstrations' before we retired back to the house to make sense of it all over dinner, a slide show and a generous amount of alcohol for Tai and myself." Qrow took a swig from his flask and leaned back in his chair. Ozpin couldn't help but note the flask appeared to be enchanted.

"Wasn't long before Tai had worked up a set of rules for it's usage and an ad hoc training plan." Qrow stood and walked around. "Tai and I were thrilled that Ruby and Yang trusted us enough to bring us into the fold, but I have to tell you it's been the source of many a gray hair for us over the last year. The only way to understand it is to use it, and often that meant willingly putting ourselves and the girls in danger. We damn near cleared Patch of elder grimm on the sly reaping a great deal of lien and equipment in the process. Every battle taught us something new about how this works, which reduced our stress in one area and added to it in another. The more capable we became and the more comfortable with it we became the more frightening we realized it's potential was. Now you've read Tai's book right?"

Ozpin nodded, "Indeed we have. It's a most enlightening read, amazingly detailed with a great deal of theory to it."

"I've been adding my own experiences to it and summarizing what we know from the students reports." Glynda added. "The hope is to catalog the full breadth and extent of what all the system encompasses."

"Let me tell you, reading about this and actually experiencing it are two different things. I'm sure glynda knows what i'm talking about." Qrow added before taking another swig from his flask.

Gyland sipped her tea. "It's almost indescribable. It's similar to the feeling one feels when your aura
was first unlocked, or when you start to develop a fighting style or learn of your semblance. Suddenly the world is more complex, more exciting. It's like awakening to all new potential and the mind goes wild with the possibilities on how to utilize everything new you learn."

Qrow nodded, "putting it mildly but yeah. It's a part of you on a deep, soul connected level. Awakening is just that, it's not like it's suddenly thrust upon you but rather like a blindfold has been removed and suddenly you can see. It may be funneled through a videogame like layout, but it's way more than that. Learning about it all from scratch was a real riot let me tell you. Yang and I as you know are alike in profession. Where as Yang's berserker attribute allows her to fortify her own potential, my speallbreaker works by shutting others down. Between that and my semblance it can be a real nightmare to fight me now. Tai's like the Arc kid, virtues manifested as magical force. Dragonhunter is about laying traps for one's adversaries something Tai can be quite devious at. Pity the grimm that crosses his path."

Qrow sighed. "And then there is Ruby. Sweet, innocent and cheerful Ruby. Gods must have some sense of humor empowering her with that death magic of hers. The more she explored her powers the more terrifying it became. Wasn't unusual to hear mumbling phrases in ancient tongues in her sleep only to call upon those same words in a fight to cast some abominable magic or another. And those damn minions of hers, gods the nightmares we had other those the first time we saw them. Not to mention the philosophical consequences of knowing there is life after death and pulling beings form that world into this one, that was a conversation I'll never forget. Tai and I had some idea due to us knowing about your history OZ, but for the girls it was a revelation."

"I can hardly imagine." Oz said. He had no memory of the other side himself, besides knowing it existed.

"Plenty of cookies and juice were spent helping the girls work though that. And that was before we discovered she could make minions out of any corpse and not just grimm. If you ever get bored ask her about the turkey incident one day."

"She resurrected a living being?" Oz said, face lit with concern.

"More like her magic possessed it, it sure as hell wasn't the same creature before and after."

Oz seemed to take relief in that. A great deal of misery had occurred due to violating the balance of life and death after all. "Quite amazing either way. I'm honestly surprised such a magic could exist, even in my day it was held as just superstition and myth."

"That so eh? Well it sure as hells isn't myth anymore." Qrow said taking his seat. "Between her spells, her minions, and that reaper cloak of hers Ruby's like the Grim Reaper reborn, her potential is both awe inspiring and terrifying. None of which was good for Tai's mental well being. Everything he's done the last year has been about protecting those girls. The more powerful and visible their abilities the harder he tried to help the girls keep their abilities under control. He'd have asked them to suppress it here at Beacon if such a thing were possible. Thankfully we knew you and Glynda would be the only eyes watching her group and you'd know what to do with what you saw. And hey, having eight more people on her in the know, including more her own age to interact with has been a great relief. Just hope we can keep all this quiet long enough to get them all trained up and ready for the wider world."

"We'll do our utmost to ensure that." Glynda said, with Ozpin nodding in agreement.

"I trust you will. Now I've been from one side of the planet to the other since awakening, and let me tell you this is everywhere. Every last huntsmen, aura unlocked individual, even civilian is classified in some make form or fashion. Never have been able to figure out how just it does that
little trick. Always wondered if it's been applied to everyone in the world, or if it only does it when we lay eyes on someone. No way to tell I suppose." Qrow said with a shrug.

"It's a curiosity to be sure. Of graver concern is who exactly is running it as such a system is well beyond any magic I've ever come across." Ozpin had spent many a night pondering that issue. The only two who seemed capable of this were long since departed.

"Can't wait to meet whomever is responsible that's for sure. I suppose that's why you sent me for this right?" Qrow reached into his waist pack and withdrew a modern looking but weathered book, "Kaspar's Journal, or rather a translated and annotated reproduction of it. Shopkeeper was rather surprised at someone being interested in it as art history isn't the most popular of fields these days. Odd given we fought a damn war to preserve it."

"Times change as do people's interests. Let us just be thankful copies of it still exist" Ozpin said as he took the offered book.

"It's interesting stuff from what little I read. I don't understand all what goes through an artist's head but on Dwayna he certainly knew how to wax poetically. Thought it was love or infatuation at first, but that doesn't quite describe it. It's more, well, reverence."

Glynda raised an eye, "That's an interesting way to describe it."

"You'll see what I mean when you dig into it. Her arrival wasn't just the start of a creative boon for him it was a life changing event. His style, his motivation, everything shifted to revolve around her."

"I look forward to reading it. Hopefully it provides some clue as to where she was from and hopefully how we can find whomever bares her name and weapon today."

"Sure as hell hope so Oz." Qrow said, "I've got a whole lot to ask her when we do."

"We all do, Qrow" Glynda said.

"I'm still surprised you were able to keep all this a secret for so long. I'd have thought you'd come to me for advice once you figured out this was magical in nature. Not to mention I never sensed any of your enchantments." Ozpin said with another sip of coffee. Qrow's current outfit teemed with the same magical enhancement that he had detected on Ruby at their first meeting.

"They were Signal students and we were Signal professors. Until we could figure out exactly what was going on Tai felt it best to keep it in the family." Unsaid was the obvious implication that Tai and Oz were not exactly on the best terms relationship wise.

"Not to mention we knew you had your hands full with the fall maiden business. Damn shame the UI won't name unknown individuals else I'd have been able to identify the trio who attacked Amber. All I know is what I told you before, two women and a male, with these symbols as their professions." Qrow brought up the list of known profession icons and pointed to three: A butterfly with eye spots, a dagger and key, and a stylized version of an arrow entering a portal.

"They hit me with some sort of semblance before I could get a real solid look at them. By the time I broke free of it they were gone and I chose to help Amber rather than pursue them. How is she by the way?"

Ozpin leaned back. "Stable but deteriorating. James should be able to help with that once he arrives."
"Let's hope so. I can tell you that when they stole their powers one of the attackers went from mundane to Veteran, while Amber fell from champion to elite."

"So she was a champion before? The UI must be interpreting maiden's powers as signifying greater threat."

"That's my thought as well, Glynda. But sadly we can't just cast suspicion on every last veteran or elite classified huntsmen out there, quite a few are designated as such due to their own skill and abilities. I've been searching around for the attackers themselves, and all I can tell is they are connected to Salem and someone has spent a lot of time and money helping them go to ground. Most every lead I could find ended up whether being a wild goose chase or a deliberate trap. Luckily the assassins and mercs who sprung said traps were small fry, easy to take care of all things considered. I got the distinct impression it was less a serious attempt at my life and more a way of burning time, knowing that Amber would get weaker by the day while whomever stole her powers grew stronger."

"A troublesome development if so. They must mean to actually use the stolen powers and not merely use the maiden to unlock a vault." Glynda said.

"Right, which brings us to the question of what they need those powers for? The vault is protected, sure, but I'm thinking they are gearing for a major fight. I just haven't been able to figure out when or where, but given they targeted fall I'm thinking Vale is the target."

Ozpin thought about it. "It could explain why the white fang is more active and better equip than usual, though we don't have any direct links between Salem and ether Torchwick or the white fang at this time."

"Not to mention the issue of the faulty sensors: They could be hiding enemy movements." Glynda added.

"All the better that I'm back then I suppose. Another pair of eyes can't hurt, especially with reports of an enemy magic user. Any ideas on who yet?" Qrow asked.

Ozpin shook his head, "Not at this time. I've contacts reviewing Torchwick's previous criminal capers looking for inconsistencies. Torchwhick himself has been silent since the white fang heist was stopped. Perhaps he's been forced to regroup or protect this new asset."

"At any rate the breathing room has been welcome. Though it remains to be seen if no news is good news or bad." Glynda added with concern.

"Hey we'll take what we can get here." Qrow said while taking another swig of his flask. "So what's our next move?"

"For now go home and rest or go visit Tai or your nieces. I'll need you nice and fresh for Monday." said Ozpin.

"What's happening Monday?" Qrow said with mild concern on his brow.

"Your first day on staff."

Qrow sat up, "Say what now?"

Glynda smiled. "You'll be assisting me come Monday as Beacon's newest adjunct combat professor. Officially it's due to the influx of students due to the Vytal Festival."
"And unofficially so there is an excuse to have me hanging around all the time, I get it. Though you know how I feel about being a teacher again." Qrow sighed into a hand.

"I'm afraid it can't be helped though I could try to find another position for you if you decline."

Qrow shook his head, "Nah it'll do, I'm sure my nieces will be thrilled when they find out in fact. We still doing the forest stuff? Going to be hard keeping that from Atlas troops when they arrive."

"Next mission is scheduled for tomorrow in fact, feel free to tag along. As for the issue of the Atlas troops we have some plans for both that and how to break the news of this to James."

"I'll be happy to tag along tomorrow Glynda. I've been wanting to stretch my legs a bit profession wise, and check in to see how far my nieces have progressed since I last saw them. As for Jimmy, can't wait to see his face when he hears about this. If we want to keep the Atlas troops off our back he'll have to know to run interference and all. Suppose then I'll head out then pending any other questions."

"I've no further questions at this time. I'll review the written report you submitted and follow up with you afterward." Ozpin said tapping a data stick on his desk.

"Right then, best be off. Hoping to catch the girls for lunch before heading back to Patch. I'll be needing to pack if I'm to show up here to work and all. Do you have quarters prepared or do I need to go apartment hunting in Vale?"

Ozpin laughed, "I'll have a professors quarters ready by the time you get here tomorrow."

"Alright then." Qrow stood and rolling his shoulders. "Tomorrow it is. Let me know if you think of anything while I'm out, Glynda knows how to reach me if you need me." Qrow said, tapping his head as he stood and made his way to the door with a wave.

"I'll start processing his paperwork and have the assigned quarters prepared at once along with the requisite office supplies for his office. If you have anything else headmaster?"

"Nothing for now Glynda."

Glynda gave the headmaster a polite nod before making her own way to the elevator, Qrow holding the door open for her.

Ozpin refreshed his coffee and started on Qrow's report. The clock was ticking and he was still playing defense in Salem's latest scheme. Somewhere in the mess of reports and ancient journals was an answer, there had to be. Such was his hope at least.

Authors notes:

Hello everyone! Sorry for the long delay here, life often gets in the way of writing. Also retooled some of the background worldbuilding to slot in some recent canon developments, which caused pretty much no conflicts with what I had planned long term

As we start on volume twos events things are bound to go off the rails a lot more than they did for volume one's, as we'll see the fallout some of the changes thus far. Butterfly effect and all, though some major events which were set in motion by outside actors are still in motion.

As for magic and its relation to weapons, this is actually something taken from Guildwars
mythos. A weapon, focus, etc is a way of accumulating magic and helps you channel it, but you don't have to channel magic though the weapon for every attack. Think of it like a large antenna of sorts. It's not required for every spell or skill however, as utility skills can be used bare handed. Things built to channel aura also happen to be quite good at channeling arcane energies.

As for spell descriptions, i'm trying to describe how they look in game or use descriptions similar to how the guildwars novels describe them.

Also note again they aren't limited to just game skills, but rather anything that profession can do in lore or in cutscenes, etc. So Majory's bone bridge or Jenna's mesmer shield? In theory the cast can do that as well. For the most part each cast member is focusing on certain areas to make each one unique, given we'll have the same base profession across multiple characters in time. So while say Glynda and Weiss are both Elementalists, they will show different skills for the time being. Think of it as different specs if you are thinking in game terms. Non meta of course, for story reasons. And well rule of cool.

And for the record because it slipped my mind, Penny's icon is a round corked jug, in other words an engineer. I'll be sure to note that next time she shows up.

And always, don't be afraid of IMing me or pointing out what doesn't work in reviews. I've yet to find a solid pre-reader so I may make the occasional mistake with character tone or grammar. I've been meaning to go back though earlier chapters and correct issues i've seen since originally uploading them, but haven't found the time yet.
Chapter 17

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The Noble Roses: Chapter 17

Ruby was skipping through the halls of Beacon, her team in tow. It was Sunday and Team RWBY was heading to Professor Goodwitch's office for a mission briefing and guild meeting.

"This is so totally awesome! Uncle Qrow is back home for good and better yet a teacher at Beacon! This is going to be amazeballs!" Ruby's excitement was matched by Yang, the sisters throwing their arms up in joy at the prospect. Ruby even had a speech ready, the good guild leader that she was. It was a real red letter day in her opinion.

"Judging by the stories you've been telling us he's certainly got skill." Blake was looking forward to the extra muscle if true, not to mention being able to learn from another veteran huntsmen. Team RWBY had picked up a lot from working alongside Glynda but the professors fighting style was different from most of the groups, with Weiss gaining the most given her shared profession and similar style of dust usage.

"Oh trust me, the stories are true." Yang said.

"Even the ones about the drinking?" Blake replied.

"Especially the ones about the drinking." Yang said matter of factually. In her opinion those stories were the best of all, and not just for the future blackmail material.

"I detest drunkards." Weiss tone relayed no shortage of disdain.

"Sore subject Weiss?"

"More than you know Yang. The bottom of a bottle is no place to find one's character."

Yang winced. "Ouch, sorry to dredge up bad memories. "

Weiss sighed and shook her head. "It's not your fault, relax. It's something I've had a long time to learn to deal with. Best to focus on what matters today and leave it for another time."

Ruby tried to cheer up her partner, not wanted a gloomy mood to ruin the day. "Uncle Qrow's not as bad as he used to be, I think this whole mess with Yang and I forced him to gain a bit of temperance. After all he wasn't that bad at lunch yesterday, right?"

Blakes ears twitched, "Given it was the middle of the day and at the mess hall at that wouldn't sobriety be expected?"

"In the past not so much." Ruby said with a smile. Weiss just groaned.

Ruby continued walking with a noticeable pep in her step. "Anyhowsit, you'll see him in action soon enough, he's tagging along today! Gods it's been ages since we last got to hunt alongside him. And we'll be back in forever fall to boot! The picturesque vistas, the baddies, the loot!" The old styled weapons and armor ticked Ruby's appreciative bone for the classics. She would get a full set of them, oh yes.
"Speaking of which, I'm starting to think waving those ambrite weapons around before our last trip to Forever Fall was a bad idea."

"No joke sis, I've been stopped in the hall no less than ten times in the last week by students asking where they can get some. As if they didn't already have weapons of their own! Granted weapons are the coolest things and these ones are extra cool and if I didn't already have one I'd want one but come on! I can only answer the question the same way so many times! I mean, I'd love to chat with them about weapons in general because have I mentioned their uber cool? " Ruby continued to rant, eyes glossing over and a noticeable stack of confusion growing on her ui name plate.

Blake nudged Weiss, "I think your partner is stuck in a loop."

"Allow me." Weiss gently smacked her partner behind the head, leaving a wet handprint on the back of Ruby's head, a clear sign of subtle use of water magic.

Ruby shook the water from her hair, "Thanks Weiss."

Weiss grinned, "Trust me, it was my pleasure"

Yang cast her sister a line, "I'm still surprised the headmaster was able to replicate it so quickly. Where did he even get the raw materials for it?"

Ruby blushed, "you could say I quite literally dropped it into his lap. I kind of forgot to pick up a log I dropped in his office when demonstrating bag carrying capacity. Fortunately said log came from the exact type of tree from which the required resin is extracted. And to think I only cut that tree down out of frustration!"

Blake smiled, "Lucky you."

"A bit too lucky." Weiss added with a huff. "This all sounds rather convenient if you ask me." Ruby shrugged in response. The system was filled with wildly useful conveniences, this was just one more log to add to the pile.

"At any rate" Yang said getting back onto subject, "We may want to consider what and to whom we show some of the more exotic stuff. Well, at least until cover stories are public and attention is properly directed off of us and onto someone with far more patience for random student questions."

"I think we can all agree to that." Everyone nodded in agreement with Ruby. "Luckily the guilds part in the aura regenerating medicine is a secret, as is the formulation in general. Even professor Peach's name is being kept out of the news as it's being credited to Beacon as a whole.

"It's understandable, " Weiss said, "The media, the Vale council and pretty much every aura unlocked individual in the kingdoms are dying to get their hands on that stuff."

"I've heard the headmaster is hoping to move into mass production in time for the Vytal Festival. Should be wonders for injuries sustained in the tournament." Yang had fought in local tournaments before and knew that despite the rules meant to limit them injuries were quite common.

"Lets just hope it doesn't fall into the wrong hands. I can't imagine certain parties ignoring the potential of it." The team knew just which parties Weiss had in mind.

"I agree, though if it enters mass production and distribution it will be impossible to keep it out of the hands of non huntsmen." It was a hard truth to Blake, but one that couldn't be ignored.

"Which i'm sure is causing the headmaster and the council no end of grief. Thankfully, we don't
have to worry about such things having our own supply."

"True that sis" Yang said, patting her sister on the back. "Though we will need to prioritise certain resource collection in the future. Yet another thing to farm."

"It's a shame professor Peach, Nora and Blake can't take public credit for the invention, you all would be rolling in royalty income." Ruby said, skimming her notes on her scroll. Blake's contribution had been minor compared to Peach's and Nora's, but Ruby and the others felt it was noteworthy.

"Oh, they get their fair share, Beacons creative accounting just keeps their names off the record for security reasons." Weiss clarified.

"And the Schnee Dust Company would know a thing or two about creative accounting." Blake added.

"Hey now!" Said Weiss indignantly, "if not for that creative accounting we'd be in much hotter water with the White Fang. Hiring five huntsmen for a simple guard job would have been overkill under normal circumstances. Because I pulled some strings to get us said job, the White Fang probably thinks we were only there due a fortuitous act of nepotism."

"That's probably true." Blake said, "The fang didn't expect such resistance, and there have been no reports of further dust robberies by faunus. The local branch may still be trying to recover their losses and reorganize for whatever they have planned next. Sadly Torchwick doesn't seem to have been slowed by the event. The press is already reporting fresh dust robberies they believe he's responsible for. The lack of a clear goal for all this is really bothering me, not to mention how they were able to acquire the means to make the attempt." Everything about this stunk, and Blake had no idea how the group she had left so recently had suddenly acquired all this material support.

"No argument there." Weiss agreed, "I do wish the headmaster had something new to tell us on that front. Sadly it appears the police are taking their sweet time investigating the results of the docks."

Yang started counting off on her fingers, "Multiple stolen bullheads, dozens of prisoners, and piles of insurance claims not to mention the SDC. I imagine they have their hands full."

"Let's hope they hurry, they faster we get to the bottom of this the faster we put an end to whatever the fang is planning." Blake declared.

"Don't worry partner, the guild is with you all the way on that front." Yang wrapped an arm around her partner, Ruby doing the same.

"For the time being all we can do is train, keep our eyes to the ground and wait for news. Not to mention our other little problem of the Torchwick variety."

"Oh gods don't remind me Ruby, we still need a game plan for that." Blake said with a sigh, "The cops bought our story but Sun saw the effects up of that magic up close and I still don't know how to explain it away. He's going to want answers sooner or later."

"Thankfully we can shove the blame for that onto Torchwick, after all we were not the ones to summon that up." Yang said, arm still around her partner.

"But I recognized it." Blake reminded the team, "He's been none to subtly fishing for information ever since. I've been able to distract him and deflect, but his suspicion is growing."

"I'll link up with the headmaster, maybe we can think of something he'll accept. Anyways, we're
here! Time to get this show on the road." Ruby said as the group at last arrived at Glynda's office door.

Ruby knocked and fired off a message to the professor.

[Ruby to Glynda: Team RWBY has arrived!.
[Glynda to Ruby: Come on in, Team JNPR has already arrived.]

The door unlocked and Ruby ushered her teammates in. They exchanged polite greetings with their friends and guildmates and settled in for the business at hand, several having helped themselves to tea and coffee supplied by Glynda.

Glynda was as usual positioned behind her desk with the teams arrayed before her while Qrow stood off to the side leaving against a wall. After a few minutes of casual chat Ruby noted the time and clapped to get the guild's attention and called things to order.

"Roses!" Ruby began with her hands held high and rose petals swirling around, red cape mysteriously waving despite being indoors., "For too long have we been confined, Unable to grow our skills and unleash our fury upon the great enemy!"

Weiss took a sip of tea, 'It's been a week since our last mission."

"But no more! At last we return to the fields of glory! Our kingdom needs our aid to secure resources that will lead our lands to greater prosperity! The forest will echo with the sounds of our wrath and fury as we scythe down our enemies and collect the spoils of battle!" Ruby waved her arms for dramatic effect as she spoke.

"We're heading to Forever Fall to clear out some grimm and get loot." Weiss warmed up her tea with some subtle fire magic. It was good stuff, rich and flavorful. She made a mental note to ask Professor Goodwitch where she got it.

Ruby's eye twitched as she continued, "Woe to our enemies for this day we go forth with a new ally. With him at our side our skills shall be refined and the shadows which consume the forest shall be burned away! "

"Professor Bran when will be joining us."

"Will you stop that Weiss!" Ruby said in exasperation as she turned to her partner. "I'm trying to rally the troops here with an inspirational speech. You're totally ruining this."

Weiss set down her teacup. "Which is all well and good. I'm just clarifying your intent less confusion hamper our efforts on today's mission."

"It's plenty clear! I mean I spent all night writing this." Ruby crossed her arms with a pout.

"You said you were working on an essay for Ports class!" came Weiss response.

"Oh please, I wrote that in like 30 minutes. Not like he actually reads the things, I think he grades based off how boisterous it sounds if anything," Weiss held back comment, as she had to admit Ruby was probably right in that regard. Noticeably no one else in the room objected ether, professors included.

"Personally I think it's kind of cute." Yang said with a smile. "Though we are scattering a lot of petals around Professor Goodwitch's office." Said professor would have been annoyed at the
display, if not for the fact the petals will dissipate naturally in time.

"Girls come on!" Ruby said with a stomp of her feet. "You're embarrassing me in front of the guild!"

"Oh no worries Ruby, we're pretty used to this by now." Jaune's statement drew nods of agreement from his team. Ruby grew redder as she processed Jaune's statement.

"Now now, " said Pyrrha, "Ruby obviously worked hard on this so we should let her finish. Please continue, guildmaster."

"Oh what's the point!" Ruby said and she sat down and continued her pout. "The moments all ruined so we might as well just get on with it. Go ahead and do your intro, Uncle Qrow." Ruby had planned a dramatic introduction for her uncle, but just didn't feel like doing it anymore.

Qrow tried to hide his amused smirk as he stood for his introduction. Despite her power Ruby was still a child in some ways. "Now some of you I've had the pleasure of meeting already but for the rest allow me to introduce myself. The names Qrow Branwen, professional huntsmen, uncle to these two lovely ladies and starting tomorrow Beacon's newest adjunct combat professor. As for my other profession I'm a spellbreaker, a variant on the same class as Yang here. I'll be joining the lot of you on these missions starting today."

"Welcome professor!" Jaune said, "Names Jaune Arc, leader of Team JNPR."

"I'm Pyrrha Nikos, Jaune's partner. A pleasure to meet you Professor Branwen."

"Lie Rin, an honor to have you with us sir."

"I'm Nora, pleasure to meet cha. I'm Ren's partner." Nora gave Ren a friendly nudge with her elbow.

"Good to meet you all, I look forward to working with you." Qrow said in response to their greetings.

"And well you know us Uncle Qrow, having had lunch with us yesterday and all." Ruby had somewhat recovered from her mood, her face showing more of her usual excitement. Well a bit more at any rate. It would take some serious sweets to get her back to 100%. OR maybe some dead grimm. Probably both.

"It's a pleasure to meet your acquaintance again, professor." Weiss said with a respectful nod of her head.

Blake followed suit. "I'm sure we will learn a great deal from you today, professor."

"Indeed, looking forward to seeing you ladies in action today as well."

"Prepare to have your socks knocked off Uncle Qrow. Team RWBY is not one to disappoint!" Yang said to the smiles of her teammates.

"No doubt about that firecracker." Qrow said, "Now introductions complete, Glynda, do your thing." Qrow motioned to his fellow huntress professor and the guild's eyes shifted to her.

"Thank you Qrow." Glynda said, pulling up a map on the holoprojector. "Now as you all may know the recent announcement of the aura regenerating medicine, officially named Aura-gen, has resulted in a renewed focus on Forever Fall and the resources there in. As a result the Vale council
has announced several new mandates related to the area. As a result they have ordered a Grimm population survey as part of the effort to determine what areas of the forest are idea for resource acquisition."

"In other words" Qrow added, "Survey and eliminate the Grimm so Vale can secure an area for commercial harvest."

"Precisely." Glynda continued, "Two thirds of the teams taking part in this program have been assigned missions in Forever Fall in response to this mandate including teams RWBY and JNPR."

Glynda pointed to the map and highlighted selected zones, "Now rather then deploy in the area directly under consideration we'll be deploying here, near the site of your class mission." The mission area blinked red, with the proposed commercial area showing as green. "The headmaster is concerned about the champion Grimm you fought during the class mission and how it was able to get so close. We'll be on the hunt for answers to that little question, as well as on the hunt for any other champion Grimm in the area."

"The more of them we take out, the safer the harvest area." Ruby said.

"Correct Ms. Rose. We in the guild are uniquely equipped to deal with them and as such have been assigned this particular duty." Glynda transferred the map to Jaune and Ruby's scrolls before dismissing the holo image.

"Now due to our expected targets Qrow and I will not be proceeding to the rendezvous area by ourselves. Instead we will be seconded to your teams as a fifth member for the duration of the mission."

Qrow spoke up next. "This will be both to help in the fighting as well as to get a better idea of where everyone stands in terms of combat ability. We won't be assuming command however, the team leaders are still in charge of their respective teams."

"I will be seconded to team JNPR" Glynda said, drawing smiles of approval from the team in question. The team normally lacked a ranged magic user so the additional firepower would be quite useful.

"A pleasure to have you with us, Professor Goodwitch" Pyrrha said with a smile.

"The pleasure is all mine, Ms. Nikos."

"And I'll be tagging along with team RWBY." Qrow said, Yang and Ruby bouncing on their heels with joy. "For the time being this will be the deployment pattern going forward though Glynda and I may swap back and forth between teams depending on the mission. Any questions?"

"What are the mission objectives?" Jaune said, looking at the map on his scroll.

Glynda folded her hands in her traditional teachers pose"This will be primarily a grimm population survey and reduction mission. Secondary objectives will be examining and repairing any disabled sensors we come across, as well as marking any signs of action by outside actors for later investigation."

"So kill grimm and note anything that looks out of place so we can follow up on it later. We know the White Fang at the docks flew low over the forest enroute, it's possible they had a staging ground in the area. Should they be encountered do not engage the white fang without backup and prior approval. " Qrows face relayed that this was not a mere suggestion.
"What about resource acquisition? I mean we have our own need for Aura-gen after all."

"It's not a priority for the main portion for the mission Ms. Xiao Long, but we will try to find time for limited harvesting during the training section of the mission." Glynda explained.

"On that note" Nora added, "If you come across any grimm scale or bone be sure to save it as The guild bank is starting to run low on both. They are required ingredients in the guild Aura-gen formulation."

"We'll keep an eye out for both, Nora." Weiss said.

"Anything else?" Qrow asked.

"Well, there is one thing Uncle Qrow." Ruby said.

"Oh?"

"You sir are representing the wrong guild! " Ruby said, pointing a finger at Qrow. "This is a Noble Roses operation."

"Well now, does that mean your dear uncle finally gets an invite? Taiyang will be so jealous."

"He's got a point there Ruby." Yang said, "Not to mention if we invite uncle Qrow we can't poke fun at him in guild chat anymore."

"It's a price i'm willing to pay." Ruby said. Not that they made fun of their dear uncle that is. Well, not too much at least.

"Alright then, let me have it." Qrow said. Ruby waved her hands before her, pulling up the appropriate menu on her ui and typing out the invite, which Qrow accepted at once. A moment later Qrow updated his own guild tag from [RUBY] to [ROSE].

Ruby smiled and nodded in satisfaction. "Now that's what I like to see. Let's all give a hearty welcome to the newest Noble Rose, Uncle Qrow!"

The guild applauded and Qrow mock bowed in appreciation. "Good to be with you all."

Once the applease died down Glynda dew the guilds attention. "Alright students, gather your equipment and meet at the bullhead dock in one hour. Dismissed."

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Meta Event:

Defeat the Alpha Beowolf Packleader 1/1 complete

Defeat the Beowolve Pack: 35/35 - complete.

"Heck yeah, Good work ladies!" Ruby said as she pumped her fist. The local area was covered in the signs of battle. Trees were reduced to splinters, there was residual magic and dissipating elemental fields here and there, and everywhere one could see piles of dead and dismembered grimm. Several of her minions were chewing on the fallen enemy, ether unaware or uncaring that their prey was dead. A typical day at the office, really.

"Ahem." Qrow coughed. He was leaning against a tree and wiping away the sweat from his brawl. The last time he'd had a workout like this was, well the last time he'd gone hunting with the family.
His outfit showed a the results of a few close calls, the rips in his shirt showing the plates of hardened scalemail he wore beneath. The set had been a gift from Yang and had saved his bacon more than a few times.

"I mean, Ladies and Uncle Qrow." Ruby scratched the back of her head. "Sorry, not used to having you with us again."

"Hey no worries. Anyone hurt?" Qrow said as a formality. He knew from his UI everyone's aura was in good shape.

"Pfft, as if those things stood a chance against badasses like ourselves." Yang said, wiping some dirt off her outfit. "Got to say it feels good to have the heart racing again, we were due for some more excitement after being cooped up for a week."

"The fact that such insanity is exciting to you is sadly not a surprise." Weiss took a sip from her canteen, the magic water restoring her vitality and satisfying her thirst. Weiss did not share her blonde comrade's sense of thrill seeking. Well, at least publically. Privately she took great satisfaction in her job.

"That was rather intense." Blake said as the last of her clones shattered. "We've faced beowolves before but i've never seen them act like that. They acted like proper wolves instead of mindless beasts like normal. They were clearly trying to separate us and gang up on the ones perceived to be weakest." Interpreting any of the group as weak would be the last mistake that pack would ever make.

"Yeah, They are normally all rawr kill scratch claw and less actual tactics." Ruby said as she scratched Bubbles the shadow fiend below his 'chin'.

"I suppose it's due to this guy." Yang said as she kicked the fallen corpse of the Beowolf pack leader. IT was the first champion beowolf Yang had ever run across.

"This is the first time we've run across one of these 'Packleaders'. I don't recognize that type of grimm from our textbooks." Weiss said.

"Really now? Given how much Peter hates beowolves i'm surprised he hasn't talked about them." Qrow made a note to follow up with the professor on the subject.

"Seeing as professor Ports lectures are rambling to say the least it's possible we may have missed it if he did." Weiss did her best to follow the lectures, but even with a weavers multitasking abilities it was hard to keep all the story and lesson threads in comprehensible order.

"Well then Ms. Schnee allow me to enlighten you." Qrow said, scanning the clearing one last time before holstering his weapon. "As grimm get older their power, intelligence and cunning grows along with them. When this happens to an alpha beowolf it eventually starts attracting other grimm to its side. At that point it's reclassified as a Alpha Packleader at least in bounty or tracking terms. For the most part such elder grimm stick to the wilds so it's pretty rare to see one get this close to a major settlement, let alone Vale itself. It's good we took it out at any rate, left to their own devices such packs can be a real problem for outlying settlements or lone hunters far from civilization."

"Sounds scary all around. I prefer my grimm as cannon fodder, thank you very much." Ruby said, with several minions chatting their agreement. "But I do have one major question: How the heck was it able to ambush us? The sensor grid was clear!"

"That Ruby," Qrow said as he checked the sensor readout on his tablet scroll, "is the million lien
question. Once we are done here let's head for the nearest sensor location, I want a look at them."

Ruby nodded, "Sounds like a plan uncle Qrow. Alright everyone let's get down, loot up and head out double time. We got ourselves a mystery to solve."

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"This is so cool!" Ruby said as she examined the weapon in her hands. It was the same type of weapon as Qrow's Harbinger, but yellow with bead like decorations as well as dark metal accents. "I mean this stuff here is obviously darksteel which is awesome by itself and super rare these days but I don't recognize this yellowish metal the main body and blade are made from."

"It think that's darksteel as well, just alloyed with something. No clue what though."

"Where did you get this? Also, can we go there? I totally want one."

"As much as I've love to take you to the border wetlands near the Vacuo wastes I doubt ether Beacon or your dad would appreciate that. It's a pretty arduous trek."

"There is always semester break!" Ruby said, handing the weapon back as she, her team and a small group of minions followed Qrow's lead toward the nearest sensor. Most were fairly quiet, scanning for threats as they walked with weapons at the ready, fearful of another grimm ambush.

Qrow laughed, "We'll see. I did pick up some souvenirs from the wetlands though."

"Oh? What cha get us?" Yang pipped in, Ruby enthusiastically smiling.

"Just a few stacks of primordium. Seem to get a lot as rewards from minor events while I was in the area, figured you girls you be interested in it."

"Primordium? That stuff goes for a fortune seeing how rare it is these days! I don't think Vacuo has been able to produce much of it since before the great war" Blake had only heard of the substance in passing from her...former associates who had been keenly interested in acquiring some.

"That means we can smelt some darksteel! You're the best Uncle Qrow!" Ruby and Yang gave their uncle a quick hug, Ruby also returning Qrow's beaded weapon.

"I'll hook you up with a smith friend of mine who can smelt the darksteel seeing as we've already got the rest of the materials in the guild bank.

"This is going to be so cool! Oh i'll have to plan on some new designs when we get back to the dorm!" Ruby mentally cleared her schedule.

"This is all quite interesting but let's stay focused shall we?" Weiss said as she kept a good distance between herself and Ruby's herd of 'terrible babies' We should be getting close to our objective."

"We ain't just close Ms. Schnee, we're here." Qrow said as the group broke though the treeline and into a clearing. The clearing was a good size and looked to have seen better days.

"Woah, what happened here?" Yang said as she surveyed the damage. "Looks like the grass and trees are all messed up. Storm damage maybe?"

"No, that's engine wash from a airship. Note the scorch marks and the fact the trees are missing branches in a radial pattern."

"Good eyes Blake, someone it seems tried to land a few bullheads here." The patterns resembled
those left behind in the clearing where they had originally landed for the mission, granted their landing zone was larger still then the current clearing.

"There also tire treads and some large impressions here. I don't think they arrived just by air."

Blake studied the tracks, recognition on her face. She knew the model that made them well. "They probably came in trucks or otherwise brought them expecting something. There is an old unused trade road a few hundred meters to the north." The road was not visible from the clearing, but there were gaps in the trees in the direction of the tracks that were heading in the correct cardinal direction of the road.

"If it's unused how do you know about it?" Weiss asked.

"It's not unused by everyone. The local White Fang made use of it and others to move people around unseen."

"Sounds like something the Headmaster might want to know about." Weiss said as she continued searching the clearing, eyes open for any threats. "Think they may be responsible for the current damage?"

Blake's ears flattened. "I...don't know. Sounds reasonable though I personally haven't seen them make use of this area, nor aircraft in general."

"I'm sure Oz already knows about the roads and their usage to be honest." Qrow said as he checked his tablet for the sensors exact location. "The White Fang isn't the only ones to make use of such old trade routes after all, it's fairly common for groups who don't like others of the legal sort knowing about their movements"

"Looks like there is other damage here, I see claw marks and what look like bullet holes. I think whoever set this up vacated in a hurry." Ruby said from her position. Her minions were surrounding her in a protective circle, the horrors clearly agitated and expecting a fight.

"Then we better get to it then. Sensor is over here, come give me a hand on this will you Blake?" Qrow said, gesturing to a tall tree nearby.

"Oh, sure professor." Blake said as she hurried to the location alongside Qrow.

"Everyone else keep an eye out until that sensor is back online, but document any additional evidence with your scrolls." Ruby said, quickly receiving acknowledgement form Yang and Weiss and they spread out and took protective positions.

Qrow boosted Blake up into the tree, the huntress quickly moving branch to branch with practice ease as she located the sensor.

"Do me a favor, take a clone of the sensor's software before you remove it."

"Alright, easy enough." Blake took out her scroll and pulled up a maintenance app for the sensors, something that was now standard issue for all the students taking part in survey operations. A few taps later she had the requested hash and clone image of the system software was stored safely on her scroll. Blake then got to work removing the sensor and replacing it with a spare taken from her waist pack.

"I wouldn't be too worried about the headmasters request for information you know." Qrow said from below.
Blake caught herself hesitating at his words for a second. "Why do you say that?"

"You aren't the only contact in the Fang out there, and lets just say you aren't the first former ne'er do well he's asked for information about 'past associations'. Hell i've been down this road personally, wasn't always a professor after all."

"I doubt your past associations are held in the same light as my own."

"I wouldn't count on that, Ms. Belladonna. I may be on the right side of the law these days but that wasn't always the case. That's a story for another time though." Qrow said. "What I can say is this: It's not easy being in this position, and frankly if talking about a subject makes you uncomfortable then don't."

"Are you telling me not to comply?"

"I'm telling you not to give away what you aren't comfortable with. Glynda, Oz, all of them aren't expecting the Fangs darkest secrets, Sienna Khan's guard rotation schedule, or even exact numbers or dispersion of agents. Vale's already got professionals and agents after that kind of stuff and frankly I doubt you even know details on such things or even the White Fang's current plan."

"What makes you say that?" Blake truly didn't know but was intrigued to hear Qrow's reasoning.

" Organizations like the Fang or worse tend to tie up loose ends, especially with operations of this scale. Given it's been months since you left and your unharmed i'd say that either you have some serious protection up the chain of command or you aren't considered a threat. I like to think the latter." Qrow took a swig from his flask. "No what Oz wants is someone outside the normal chain of intelligence who can keep her ears to the ground, and read the mood of the students and Vale in a way that the pros can't. That way when the folks who do know the master plan start dropping we can get ahead of the bloodshed."

Blake considered this as she activated the replacement sensor and started to climb back down, Qrow confirming the results on his tablet scroll as the grid refreshed with several new targets in the surrounding woods.

"Looks like that did the trick and sure enough we have company near by." Blake removed the sensor from her pack and handed it to Qrow, the professor turning it over in his hands and furling his brawl as he noticed it's condition. He said nothing as he stowed it in his own pack.

"I suppose that means we should head off then, after all we are here to cull grimm." Blake said.

"That we are Ms. Belladonna, that we are. And keep in mind what I said and feel free to come to me personally if you need to talk. Trust me when I say you'll find me to be a remarkably sympathetic ear."

Blake nodded as she considered the offer. "I'll keep that in mind."

Qrow acknowledged before shouting for the group. "Alright ladies looks like we have unwanted company nearby, how about we show them a proper Beacon greeting."

"Read my mind Uncle Qrow." Ruby said as she reviewed the map and the new contacts. "Lets hit the ones to the northwest and sweep back down toward the rendezvous point."

"Sounds good to me Ruby, lead the way." Qrow said.

Ruby rallied her minions and pointed "RWBY, Move out!"
Qrow and Glynda rested against a rock as they observed the guild’s personal training a short while later. Some guildmates were sparing in one on one or one to many fights, others were comparing notes and testing skills, or just chatting excitedly while testing out their new drops or latest inventions. If not for the obvious displays of magic one would see the training as nothing out of the ordinary in terms of huntsmen activities.

"Quite the motley crew we have going here." Qrow said as he watched the guild train.

Glynda smiled as she made some notes on her tablet. "They are certainly a diverse group in terms of ability and disciplines. Despite their differences and the unfamiliar nature of their new abilities they have so far proven themselves quite adept at reinforcing their strengths and identifying their weaknesses."

"Having Beacon's lead combat professor giving them a hand has no doubt been a boon to them. Couldn't have been easy to oversee the training of so many students on top of learning your own new skillset."

"I'm flattered but a lot of the credit is due to Ruby and Yang. You and Tai trained them well. Without their expertise the rest of us would be flying blind. It couldn't have been easy to get them to where they are today."

Qrow took a sip from his canteen and raised an eye at the flavor of the summoned water. "Was certainly the challenge of a lifetime."

"Something else on your mind besides admiration of your nieces current state of skill?"

"Yeah, wanted to get your thoughts on this." Qrow took a sensor out of his pack and handed it to Glynda. "Pulled this one after we got ambushed by a pack of beowolves, none of which were showing on the sensor net. Notice anything off about it?"

She turned the sensor over in her hands as she examined it. Glynda's eyes narrowed as she came across a small, sleek device attached to the rear of the unit. It appeared to be slightly misaligned with the unit, obviously applied in haste. "Whats this?"

"That little doohicky is why I suspect is why the sensor failed to detect the grimm."

"Any idea what it is?"

Qrow nodded, "Actually I do. I've had the displeasure of seeing something like that before. Granted the one I saw was older, larger and less sophisticated."

Glynda careful examined the device. No larger than a stick of gum and expertly blended into the sensor it would be very easy to miss if one wasn't looking for it. Only the misalignment of the device to the larger sensor gave prof that it was out of the ordinary. "Where?"

"Mountain Glen." The color in Glynda's face drained at the name as Qrow continued "Took part in a resource retrieval mission there some years ago. Objective was to fly in and retrieve some records from one of the buildings nearest the original breach. Came across a few sensors while searching for the records, probably thrown around from the grimms assault. Anyways, quite a few of them were equip with things that looked a lot like that. Even brought one back to Oz for investigation. Never did find out just who had rigged those however, council was real hush hush about it."

Glynda understood their reasoning. A good portion of a kingdoms defense was built on the idea
that the people believed the defenses to be sound. If people stopped believing they were safe behind the walls the resulting despair and panic would attract mass amounts of grimm. The idea that someone purposely sabotaged said defenses, or that the tech even existed to do that could be psychologically dire. The device was easy enough to miss and the investigation to date had been focusing on the sensors software. It was possible Ozpin or herself would have missed the device in question given it's dimensions. She'd have to check some of the other retrieved units and see if they sported similar devices.

Glynda stowed the sensor in her pack. "Do the student know about this?"

"Not yet. Told them it may just have been faulty and had them replace it. Grid immediately registered a few miscellaneous grimm in the area once reactivated which were fairly easy to take out and served as a good distraction."

"Once we're back at Beacon we will take a fresh look at the data and see if we can't determine just how many sensors may be affected and where. I suppose this answers the question of how grimm are slipping through, now we just have to worry about the why and the who."

"Anything clue as to who placed this?"

"Given were we found it and the evidence left beyond my money is on the White Fang. Now these things are designed grimm or registered huntsmen scroll signals but most don't know that however so i'm seeing two possibilities. Ether one, the fang doesn't know that are were told it would mask their movements. Or two they do know that and this is setup for something else. Something with Grimm. As to who actually made these things, i'll give you one guess as to who has the desire, the resources and the money to make it happen."

'Salem' Glynda thought to herself as she felt a headache coming on. "Just another problem to deal with."

"We'll leave it to Oz to sort out of next step there. In the meantime we better get back to this. Between the Fang, you know who and a mysterious magic using outlaw running around, these kids need to be ready for anything."

"I'd rather them not get involved with certain business. Not so long as we can help it."

"We're huntsmen Glynda, since when has trouble not found its way to us when least convenient?"

"Point taken Qrow." The two professors watched as an errant explosion sent Jaune cartwheeling through the clearing. A quick dusting off and a heal ability later Jaune was back on his feet and disappeared in a blue flash before reappearing back at his team, Nora mouthing an apology. "Looks like I need to have a talk with Ms. Valkyrie about explosive safety. Again." Glynda said as stowed the tablet in her waist pack and started toward team JNPR.

"Have fun with that." Qrow said. "Myself, I think I'll take a closer look at Blake's abilities. Time we start learning how to defend ourselves against it should Torchwick's ace in the hole come knocking."

Qrow watched as Ruby lectured her team on some combo attack or another. Strong as she was, strong as they all were Qrow hated the idea of throwing them into the fray with Salem. Times as they were however he feared the fight would come to them whether they wanted it or not. Qrow had already lost people to that fight, cherished ones. He vowed not to lose anymore. "Guess we have our work cut out for us, eh Summer" Qrow said softly as he made his way to Team RWBY.
Author's notes:

Sorry for the exceedingly long delay here folk, real life has a way of coming between oneself and writing. Things have calmed as of late so hopefully that helps things on the writing front.

Qrow's current outfit is similar to his canon one, save perhaps a bit looser as it hides the presence of his heavy scalemale below. He does have armor sets that more directly advertise his heavy armor nature, but tends to keep those in reserve for more dire situations. Best ot to advertise your protection in his opinion.
A loud 'thud' echoed through the Beacon cafeteria as Ruby dropped a large binder and her lunch tray upon the table. "Alright ladies listen up! The new semester is starting up tomorrow and I think it's long past time we had ourselves some quality time as a team."

"We spend a great deal of time together as is Ruby." Weiss said, hardly looking up from her soup, "Or have you forgotten the near endless training we've been doing as of late and our participation in the Survey Operations and Reconnaissance Program. I'd wager that since the year began, we've spent more time together then apart." Weiss was glad for the chance to refine her skills but even she had her limits. Mostly limits involving her patience and a particular team leader who shall remain nameless.

"I'm personally thinking something more fun and entertaining and less slaughtering horrors." It was a good thing grimm dropped money as the team was spending a small fortune on dust and repairs, and space in the dorm was growing tight with the mass of ingredients, projects in progress and related cluttering up the place.

Yang's mouth caught the berry slung her way by Nora with a munch, "Weren't you the one giggling yesterday when we ambushed that group of Ursa? Oh! Not to mention the way you were literally glowing while testing out your new ambrite scythe" Ruby had yearned for such a weapon for weeks, finally getting it as a drop courtesy of one dead Champion Griffin.

Ruby smiled at the memory of the event in question then shook the daydreams forming from her mind. "That's different! Come on you all know what I mean here." Ruby turned to her faunus teammate, "Back me up on this Blake."

Blake flipped through some notes while eating, "I dunno Ruby, i'm more inclined to rest and enjoy tonight in solitude. We've a lot to catch up on schoolwork wise given how busy we've been with, well you know." Between the white fang, the mysterious magic user and field work the team had been running on high as of late. The wait for news or new information was positively draining on their mental state while the grimm took a toll on their physical. Toss in the time researching and refinement of their new abilities and their various crafting projects and the team was running on nearly empty. The prospect of tests and homework seemed positively welcoming at this point, if only as a distraction in Blake's opinion.

"Blake's right. We should use the time to catch up on studies, especially given a certain team leader's less than stellar performance in Prof. Greene's last exam." Weiss was giving Ruby her best 'see, me and Blake agree on somethings' look. On any other day, this may have been effective but Ruby's hype provided an impenetrable defense.

"First off, That test was bull hockey! I mean I am the night, the creeping dread, the grasping cold!" Ruby said in exasperation. "So how on Remnant could I get a C on a stealth exam, hmm?" Weiss said nothing, staring at Ruby's bright red cape. " I mean who else comes to mind when you think stealth?"

"Blake and Ren?" Weiss and Yang said simultaneously. Blake said nothing, reaching back for a low five from Ren, Team JNPR being seated at the table behind team RWBY. Yang caught another flying grape and gave Nora a thumbs up.

Ruby waved off her team's response, "And secondly, the sort of outing I have in mind is the perfect way to unwind and relax after all the recent kerfuffles. JNPR hangs out like all the time and you
can see how chill they are."

"A team that plays together, slays together." Ren said, getting nods of agreement from his team.

"Hey on the subject of JNPR" Blake said as she looked up from her own notes, "How are things going with the search for information on you know who?"

"Slow, honestly." Pyrrha said, "I'm not finding a whole lot about her in the library, nor about sunspear in general beyond some old references. I brought up the subject to Prof Oobleck and he seemed thrilled by the chance to research it. We've a meeting next week in fact to go over his findings." Kormir had been rather quiet as of late, and when she did speak it was more questions for Pyrrha about the state of the world and her own aspirations rather than details about Kormir herself. Well, save for compliments about her spear work, a subject Kormir seemed to take great delight in recognizing.

Jaune continued, "That hasn't stopped us from enjoying ourselves in our spare time however. We are actually set to hit up a movie tonight, the new Scarlet Briar flick is opening."

"Oh, that does sound like fun." Yang said. It had been a while since she'd last seen a movie or otherwise got out of the dorms for some entertainment, her friends had been tearing up her inbox with requests for this or that. Yang watched as Nora loaded the next volley of fruit into her spoon catapult. "Maybe we should hear Ruby out and at least consider what she's got planned." Yang grinned, "After all, Yanging out a bit may do us some good."

Groans from team RWBY and JNPR came in response. Nora tabled her loaded strawberries and reached for an apple.

Weiss sighed and put down her spoon, her attention turning to her partner. "Let's hear it then, Ruby. I can't promise i'll agree to attend but I can at least give the idea the proper amount of consideration." Given her personality and history, Blake wasn't sure if Weiss's statement was a positive or a negative expression, but turned her ears toward Ruby nonetheless.

Ruby excitedly clapped before opening up her binder, it was as glamorous as the one Weiss had, but Ruby wasn't willing to scrap all the Profession and level breakdowns Weiss had filled her binder with.

"Friends! Your esteemed leader has planned for you only the most incredible, the most amazing, the most bestest day that can possibly be packed into a single day given travel times and our curfew!" Ruby grinned, her hands on the binder. "And it all starts with a little thing called shopping."

Nora let loose the apple, which was intercepted a moment before impact. "If shopping is your game then may I suggest a lovely dress shop down on expansion square. Their summer selection is to die for." Coco said as she sat down in front of Ruby and took a bite of apple, her team following behind her and taking seats themselves. Blake, Weiss and Yang exchanged their own greetings as they made room for the new team.

"Oh, Hi Coco, Team CFVY. " Ruby said, checking her plans and adjusting them accordingly. "As for dresses I prefer to make my own, but I could always use some ideas on the latest fashions." Ever since she'd taken up the trade skill years ago Ruby had made as much of her selection of outfits as she could. She's never gotten the hang of boot making but had most of the rest down pretty well. The new transfer students and their varied selection of outfits had set Ruby's mind ablaze with new ideas, and she had all but exhausted a notebook sketching out new outfits. Her list of planned additions to her collection was rivaled only by her planned weapons developments. The
life of a Reaper-Huntress was a busy one when it came to design.

Glynda still resisted Ruby's offers to tailor something for her, the professor preferring to acquire them elsewhere. Ruby didn't buy that excuse, believing Glynda just wanted to hide her measurements. The meanie.

Coco leaned forward, her glasses sliding down her nose a bit. "And that girlfriend is one of the reasons for this little visit. Word has gotten around you see about those fabulous outfits you've tailored up for your teammates and between those and the fancy new weapons you lot are waving around it's enough to make a girl positively green with envy"

"Well, made them all save for my own that is, That one is a Xiao Long original" Yang said, brushing some mock dirt off her shoulder.

"A bit too armored for my taste but I gotta admit you pull it off. Kudos." Coco said, eyeing the blonde. Yang smiled in response.

Ruby smiled, always interested in talking fashion. Weiss was still stubbornly refusing to girl talk with her. Someday though, "Glad they met with your approval Coco. You have questions about them?"

"My question is Ruby: do you do commissions and how much lien do I need to slide across the table to get one of my own?" Coco laid a magazine down on the table, flipped open to a particular image. "I'm thinking something like this."

Coco observed the gathered huntresses as Ruby reviewed the image, Coco's eyes darting to and fro behind her mirrored sunglasses. Yang was still goofing off, nothing unexpected there. Blake's ears were turned toward their conversation but she was otherwise focused on her school notes, though Coco spied a few news clippings about dust robberies and the white fang. Weiss was giving her and the rest of team CFVY side glances, scribbling something down in the margins of the page. CFVY was listed with a series of icons by each letter. A stylized circular like gunsight, A reverse S bisected with a line, resembling two scythes, a triangular arrangement of three circles and a shield respectively. Beside each was also a number. Coco filed that information away for later review.

Ruby finished her review of the design, drawing Coco's attention. "Hmm, The shirt and scarf I can do but the leather may be a bit tricky, that's more Ren's thing."

"Li Ren is a leather worker?" Coco said, casting a gaze his way.

"Sure is!" Nora said with pride, setting down a pie. "Ren made my leather skirt and my new long coat. He's the best."

Ren smiled and shrugged, "It's a hobby."

Coco had been rather impressed with Nora's fresh attire, the outfit both sexy and functional, otherwise known as the ideal for huntress fashion, at least in her opinion. "Starting to wonder if my teams the only one not involved in the fashion trade or something." Coco eyed her team.

"Don't look at me, I'm too busy with my photography to pick up a new hobby" Velvet said tapping her ever present camera.

"I don't know how to sew." Yatsuhashi said.

"I suppose I could give it a whirl." Fox said with a smile, "though I might have a bit of a learning curve."
Coco laughed, "Thanks, I'll keep that in mind partner."

"Anyways, I'd be happy to give it a short, though I'm a bit backlogged given I'm working on our dresses for the Vytal ball and such. Though the weapons I can't help you with, the headmaster controls who gets access to the ambrite, we are just field testing it."

"Fox and I have already submitted requests along those lines, as have sure half of Vale by now." Yatsuhashi said. Coco and Velvet hadn't expressed much interest however, as it was questionable as to if the material would be useful for their particular weapons.

"How long a lead time for orders would you say?"

"Ruby thought, "I could probably have it ready by the time The pre-vytal field missions come around, provided Ren helps me out a bit. If the rest of your team wants anything we are looking at closer to Vytals start at best."

Coco checked her internal schedule and found no issues with that time frame. So long as she could rock her new look in time for Vytal all was good. "That'd be fine. Just let me know how much cash to bring along when I show up for measurements."

"Will do." Ruby gave a thumbs up. Weiss rolled her eyes at yet another thing on Ruby's plate, as if they weren't scrambling for time as is. Still, time spent sewing was time Ruby wasn't pestering her about this or that, so this was a net win in Weiss's book.

Coco rose from the table, business concluded. "Gotta love a girl who kills it in the field and in the fashion area. If you were just a few years older…"

"Coco." Velvet said curtly, eyeing her team leader.

"Just saying Velvet. Anyways, catch you ladies and gentlemen, we are due in the field ourselves in a bit. Those trees in Forever Fall aren't going to secure themselves." CVFY had been chosen for the survey program themselves, one of the select third year teams to be involved. The extra cash had done wonders for her wardrobe, and the added field experience was greatly appreciated.

"Bye Velvet, team CFVY." Blake said with a wave alongside her teammates and friends as CFVY filed out.

"So anyways, best day ever plans." Ruby said, tapping her binder once again on the days main topic. Her team leaned in, and Ruby began to explain her idea for the day.

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Safely out of earshot and having given Sun and Neptune's outfits an approving glance, Coco addressed her team as they made their way to the bullhead docks. "So?"

Fox's voice sounded in team CFVY's heads. "Sounds like you have a lovely new addition to your wardrobe on the way. Soon we are going to have to request additional closet space."

Coco rolled her eyes, "Thanks, though I was talking about their auras."

"Oh I know. " fox projected with a grin. "As for their Aura, having seen them up close I can confirm something very strange is going on with teams RWBY and JNPR. Their aura is different, layered somehow. One part is the familiar aura all huntsmen and people have to an extent, the other is something else. It's beautiful, intriguing and utterly indescribable."
Coco nodded, "The same as the headmasters?"

"Somewhat and somewhat not, at least for RWBY and JNPR as well as Goodwich since the start of the year in her case. The new Adjunct Professor Branwen's has the same thing going on, though part of his is more in line with the headmasters. Outside them I've only seen similar while wondering Vale with the team. One source is always too distant to make out clearly and the others seem to vanish if I try to focus on them."

The abrupt change with Glynda Goodwitch was what had originally tickled Coco's curiosity. To say she was into her blond professor was an understatement and the fact that said professor was spending a lot of time with teams JNPR and RWBY was also something she'd noted early on. It had made her more than a little jealous. "Are they as powerful as the impression you get from Ozpin?"

"In some cases stronger." Fox said trying to put it into words "They are similar but in a way quite different, more focused maybe? I don't know how to describe it exactly." Fox had no context to compare it to. It was like trying to describe artwork to a blind person, something his friends had tried and failed to do, sometimes repeatedly. Ruby burned brightest by his judgement, while Nora was the faintest. Everyone else fell somewhere in between, with Ozpin being an enigma all to his own.

"It feels wrong to be so suspicious of our friends like this. I mean they've always been nice to us and everything." Velvet's voice carried a tone of distress to it. Blake had always been on good terms with the teams in question, more so once Blake revealed herself as a fellow faunus.

"No harm in it, just trying to satisfy a curiosity." Coco said to her team, "Those teams show up and suddenly things start changing all over the place. New materials, healing concoctions, new programs, teachers, you name it.

"Not to mention the strange things I sense off in the woods as of late. Often in the sectors JNPR and RWBY are sent to survey." Fox could easily discern the warm glow of Aura or the void of the grimm, but he had no context for the other energies he'd sensed.

"And wouldn't you know it, those teams are at the center of it all each time. Something odd is going around Beacon and I'm dying to figure out just what." Coco doubted her team was the only ones to make those connections, with rumors aplenty being whispered in the halls of Beacon. They had been some suggestions of favoritism among the students, something only tempered by the selection of other teams for the survey program and a few choice other professors and students rockin new ambrite weapons, though none quite so sophisticated as those wielded by JNPR and RWBY.

"But still" Velvet sighed.

"I agree with Coco on this subject. While I do not suspect our friends have any ill intent, I can't help but wonder what exactly is going on." Yatsuhashi patted his partner's shoulder gently. Velvet gave in and relaxed, trusting that he of all people wouldn't deceive her. If Yatsuhashi was confident of their course that was good enough for her.

"At any rate, it's shaping up to be an exciting year." Fox projected to his team.

Coco smiled. "No arguing that. Now come on folks, time to make us some money. That outfit isn't going to pay for itself after all." Further conversation turned to the days objective and proposed tactics. It was time to do what huntsmen do best.
Emerald flicked her pilfered liter open and close as she entered the safe house, Mercury and Cinder in tow. "Are we sure Roman is ready for phase two? His track record to date is less than exemplary after all."

Cinder sat down and poured herself a glass of wine. "Despite the incompetence of our dear Roman and our other associates we achieved all the goals we needed to advance the schedule. The White Fang's losses are higher than expected but that's their problem to deal with. They remain as an organization as obedient as ever." She had no idea how Adam was managing that and honestly didn't care, so long as they continued to do the part laid out for them.

"Let's hope they stay that way Gods know we don't need any other complications to add to the pile. Ozpin has been far more active than we had anticipated."

Cinder frowned as she swirled the wine in her glass. "Despite the growing number of huntsmen prowling the woods and reinstalling sensors there are no signs they have discovered our true objective through all the noise the Fang has been generating." Normally Cinder may have called in help to cull said huntsmen population, but their status as students made this difficult. Too many questions would be asked if losses grew beyond the norm. So long as Ozpin was in control they would have to rely on their current plan to reduce the local huntsmen population. "As for Ironwood's forthcoming arrival, that shouldn't affect our objectives ether. An army is worthless if he doesn't know where to sic them. At any rate, leave those details to me, you concentrate on acting the model students for now."

"Joy to that." Emerald said with a roll of her eyes. She had no reservations about how teeth grating it was going to be to act like a bunch of goodie two shoes for months on end again.

"On that subject we may have a problem." Merc said from his position leaning against a wall.

"Oh? Do tell." Cinder said, eyes locked to his.

"I took a look at our class schedule and a certain name popped out to me." He said, sending said schedule to his partners. Emerald's eyes went as wide as saucers and Cinder couldn't hide her frown.

"I take it you ladies see it as well. Qrow's not only back in Vale, Ozpin's hired him as an adjunct professor of combat and tactics. It's going to be impossible to avoid him if we are to pose as students."

"I thought he was supposed to be off chasing his tail in Mistral." Emerald exasperated, turning to Cinder.

Cinder grit her teeth. "Ozpin must have called his favorite dog back for some reason." Cinder made an immediate note to check with her associates as to investigating where and whom Qrow may have reached out to. She needed to know what Qrow knew, why he had been ordered to return, and why Ozpin was keeping him close. Qrow had been a professor once, but had long since shifted to being a solo operator. Suddenly returning to academia was suspect at best. "Irregardless, our objectives and course remain unchanged. We've too much invested in the current plan to shift gears now, not without more information as to what Qrow's new objective is."

"Still, it's a complication. We're screwed if he identifies us after all." Mercury said, though the others understood the implications of Qrow's presence without his helpful input.

"We could try for a disguise, make it harder to recognize us. Use new weapons, styles, you name
Cinder shook her head. "We've too much invested in our current covers with the Haven students. If we show up with radically different looks or weapons they will get suspicious." It had taken months to establish their cover as a team. Having to take Roman's enigmatic pet as a fourth member had been an unfortunate necessity, but the girl had silently played her part and had proven her worth on the job. Off the clock Neo's behavior had been a mixture of longing for her boss's company and mindlessly staring at sheets of paper with dice in hand and a look of frustration on her face. Cinder took no interest in such games and thus had paid little attention to either behavior. Neo, or Mint as she was known to the student would not be infiltrating Beacon alongside them, Roman having requested her aid as of late on something even though he hadn't disclosed just what. The girl made Cinders hair stand on end but had yet to show any behavior out of the ordinary besides her incredibly useful semblance. It had been remarkably easy to explain her absence, many teams being incomplete or arriving via separate means. "We'll just have to do our best to avoid too much notice and trust that Emerald covered our escape as well as she claimed." Cinder's eyes locked to Emerald as she spoke.

Emerald couldn't help but sweat under the intensity of that stare. "He broke free quicker than expected, but I'm confident Qrow didn't get a good look at us."

"Let's hope that's the case." Cinder finally broke her stare and returned to her wine, Emerald letting out a breath in relief. "Now, any more complications or are we free to start preparations for our forthcoming attendance?" Silence and shakes of heads was all she received in response. "Good, then you both know what to do." Emerald and Mercury moved to their rooms to pack and dispose of anything tying them to this location.

Cinder sipped her wine and closed her eyes, mentally noting what adjustments she could make to the overall plan. Devious as Ozpin was he was still acting within their predictions. She could taste her ambition's goal as clearly as she could the wine upon her lips. Somewhere in Beacon lay the fall maiden, and with her the power that so rightfully belonged to Cinder. She could feel the power within her crying out for it's missing half, and as such she knew that Amber still drew breath. This was a problem that would be rectified as soon as the girls location could be discovered. Her associates had eyes on every clinic and hospital in the Vale region with no hits. Amber had to be at Beacon itself somewhere, Cinder was sure of it. "It's only a matter of time." Cinder said to herself, calming the fire within her. Cinder was not the sort of woman who would be denied, not this close to achieving her goal. She melted the now empty wine glass into a dagger and thrust it into the coffee table before her, the knife disintegrating a moment later leaving a gash in the wood as the only evidence of the assault. Cinder headed to her room to attend to her own belongings and set the stage for the next part of the grand game she prayed Ozpin didn't even know he was playing.

Authors notes:

Well now, it's good to be back after the hectic last few months. Here we set the stage for the events of Volume two, with all the various wheels in motion and suspicion abounding. I've been lucky in that nothing in Volume six or seven to date had conflicted with any of my plans, besides some new additions that I can make great use of plot wise here.

Some knowledge is needed of the After the Fall novel to understand team CFVY here, mostly in how Fox's semblance works. I suggest you go read it, it's a great book and adds a lot of lore to the series. If he's talking in italics assume that's him using his semblance.

Chapter is rather short but there isn't much more that needs to be said here that won't fit
better with the next chapter. A few plot additions will be coming soon, mostly to tie into future plot and the consequences of the casts professional abilities.

As for CFVY's professions, for those unfamiliar with the icons Coco is Deadeye, Fox Scourge, Velvet Holosmith and Yatshuhashi is Guardian. I based these both on their choice of weapons, as well as their semblances, history, and so on.

For those needing a recap including I may have not mentioned:

Ruby: Reaper, Weiss: Weaver, Blake Chronomancer, Yang: Berserker.


Glynda: Elementalist, Qrow: Spellbreaker, Taiyang: Dragonhunter, Ozpin: Revenant

Penny: Engineer, Cinder: Renegade, Mercury: Thief, Emerald: Mesmer

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