A Brawler's Guide to Love: Redux

by MisterBlender

Summary

In which Yang realizes she's got it bad for one Blake Belladonna. But, will this new relationship be able to fix pains of old?

Notes

So, this is a rewrite of a story I was writing about two years ago. I got a bunch of ideas that I couldn't refit into the old story and tossed them back and forth with a friend. They said I should try rewriting it! So, that's what I'm doing. And, this time, they're pushing me to finish it. So, here's hoping!

It's still got some similar dialogue from the previous version, but there's enough new I hope it's good for people who have already read it.

Anyway! Hope that this is better and that you enjoy.
Chapter 1

Fall was always such an interesting time of the year.

It was a time of great change. The summer days of prior months were slowly swept away. The heat, summer bodies, the bright sun, the pool parties all gave way to the incoming cold. A particularly pessimistic person might say that it was a time of decay. A time when all around you, things started to die off. The pretty flowers, the leaves on the trees, most plants in general… It was really all kinds of grim, if you really thought about it. Of course, the fall, then, was the perfect backdrop for the holiday known as Halloween. It was a holiday steeped in spirits and the concepts of life and death. Supposedly, one of the nights that spirits were more easily seen than usual. A holiday where you hid your face and embraced not truly being yourself. A complex holiday, for sure.

Except for when the usual band of idiots was trying to decide what to do on such a night.

“I say we go pumpkin smashing!” A ginger girl cheers, slamming her fists on the lunch table with a wild grin. “Nothing compares to it! Just picture it!”

Yang rolls her eyes a little bit, leaning back in her seat with a sigh. This would probably be the third time Nora had brought this particular plan up. And, the blonde didn’t see the opinion on the matter changing at all in the five minutes it’s been since it last came up. The collective grumble from the table abroad seems to prove her point more than true. Fiddling with the slightly dulled hooks at the end of her prosthetic, she glances around for something to occupy herself with other than going through the motions of this conversation. Again.

Her eyes slide just to her right and onto her best friend. She probably shouldn’t be surprised.

Blake is sitting next to her, stoically reading a book and actively ignoring the conversation going on (lucky). In the last couple weeks, she’d found that her eyes had been drawn to Blake more and more. Not that she hadn’t ever looked at Blake with more than a friendly glance, but these last couple had been especially hard for her to handle. Her crush on the faunus girl had been an ongoing thing ever since her family moved here a few years ago. They’d become fast friends, even though Yang had been struck through the heart pretty early on. For a good while, that had worked and been enough. It had steadily started to wear on her, but it was something she could handle and completely control herself around.

And, then Blake got a damn haircut.

A fucking bob cut.

And, Yang had come to the realization that she couldn’t handle it.

This was probably one of the few times in the last couple weeks that she’d actually seen Blake in person because of it. She’d always come up with an excuse as to why she couldn’t go hang out. Homework, taking out Ruby for ice cream, chores, studying, pretty much anything that meant she could weasel her way out of hanging out with her one on one. At least with the group around, she could focus on something other than how hot her best friend was. How her hair just framed her face perfectly. How it really made the fluffy ears atop her head stand out all the more proudly. How much more mature it made her look. Especially with the dark eyeliner the girl had taken to wearing. And, frankly, how much it all seemed to actively try to put the blonde into cardiac arrest.
It just wasn’t fair.

She loved her relationship with Blake. She was darkly humorous and sassy as all hell. She didn’t take any shit from anyone. She was weird, too! Blake had such a strange catalog of interests that it usually would put most people right off of spending time with her. But, honestly, that was what attracted Yang the most to her. She doesn’t know how many times they’d had casual conversations about true crime while eating ice cream on the porch. Conversations during sleepovers about some weird thing she’d discovered. Blake was just… a friend she wanted to keep.

And, that was why she was so dead set on trying not to do anything. Blake was one of her few BEST friends in the world. Sure, she had friends that she loved and got along with, but Blake was just… different. And, she didn’t want that to change just because she had put her foot in her mouth. If Blake didn’t like her in that way and grew distant because of it, she would be devastated.

Hell, she didn’t even know if she liked girls! You'd think she'd have found out by now! But, Blake hadn’t shown any interest in ANYONE in her time here. There was nothing to go off of!

What was a lesbian to do?

Grow some balls and address her feelings directly, of course. But, was clearly not an option.

No, she was just going to hope this blew over.

Blake seems to realize she’s being watched, as her amber eyes flick up to meet Yang’s own. She’s caught for a minute on the calm expression on the girl’s face. Her eyebrow slowly raises. And, with that, Yang turns her head quickly back to the group’s conversation with a light flush on her cheeks. Out of the corner of her eye, she can see Blake continue staring at the side of her head for a few moments longer. Then, she just looks back down at her book like nothing had happened.

Nora had stood up from her seat to thoroughly explain her plan. “We put the pumpkins on a post. We get a big ol’ hammer. And we take turns just… Bam!” The excitable girl smacks her hand down on the table. “Smashin’ them! We get points based on how the pumpkin looks, how well it got smashed, how far all that pumpkin shrapnel went, how far the pumpkin itself flew~ Ohh, maybe we could stream it~”

Yang’s eyes slip over as a hiss of annoyance comes from the other side of the table. Weiss Schnee, looking very unenthused to be having this conversation again, speaks right up. “Smashing vegetation is not an activity anyone wants to do, Nora. Besides, I would rather not be rung up for petty vandalism just because you wanted to smash up a bunch of gourds like an idiot!”

“Hey, I’m not an idiot! Not that much, anyway!”

Pyrrha clears her throat softly. “Weiss is right. Erm, not about the idiot part, but about the ‘petty vandalism’ part. It would be… very disrespectful to smash such a thing tonight of all times. Especially when such hard work goes into them. Not to mention it would probably be very loud and disruptive.”

Nora looks personally offended. “Guys, we wouldn’t be smashing, like, pumpkins people made! I’ve got a whole wheelbarrow full of pumpkins back home! We just wheel them over to a clearing where no one’s around and freakin’ have at it!”

Pyrrha blinks and slowly looks to Nora’s boyfriend, who looks to be paying about as much attention to the conversation as Blake is. “Does she really have a~”

“Don’t ask.”
He elaborates and Pyrrha doesn’t seem all that eager to inquire further, so the conversation starts to lull. Nora looks back and forth among her friends and crosses her arms with a big pout on her face. Ren gently pats the small of her back and she plops back down in her seat. “Well, that’s my idea! What, you guys have a better idea? That’s super exciting? And, NOT a dusty Sam-hane exhibit at a boring ass museum?”

Weiss bristles and blushes. “Y-You’re just afraid of culture! And, it’s pronounced ‘Sah-wen’, you-”

Oh, boy, here we go.

There’s a sudden clearing of a throat that causes all eyes to turn toward it. Blake smirks a little bit, amused to have gotten everyone’s attention at once. Yang finds herself lightly biting her lip at the confidence the gothic girl seems to exude. She, like Ren, didn’t talk much in the group as a whole. So, whenever she had an idea, everyone was curious as to what would make her speak up. “I vote that we go to a real haunted house.”

Curiosity peaks at the table. Yang, herself, grins and sits up a little straighter, Honestly, that sounded like the perfect sort of thing to do on a night of spooks. And, such a Blake thing to suggest.

Weiss looks skeptical, lips drawn together in a thin line. “And, what exactly would that entail, Blake?”

Blake’s smirk grows as her eyes come to rest on the white-haired girl. “Exactly what it sounds like it entails, Weiss. We go out to a notoriously haunted house, we sneak inside, and we poke around to see what we can find. Simple, easy, and scary. Who knows? Maybe we’ll come into contact with a spirit or two.”

Yang can see Weiss’ cheeks get a little puffy in response. A cute pout of epic proportions. And, she pretty much knows exactly what the girl is about to say. She smiles and even mouths along to it in three, two, one… “There is no such thing as ghosts. That’s a stupid idea.”

Blake laughs. “Well, regardless of your opinion on the existence of ghosts, I think it would be a fun experience. And, appropriately creepy for the season. Much better than arguing around in circles all night, anyway. Don’t you think?” Then, she glances over just to Weiss’ side and grins at her way to sway Weiss to her side. “What do you think? Penny, Ruby?”

Weiss immediately frowns at the dirty tactic, though Blake doesn’t even acknowledge the warning glare she gets in return. Ruby looks up to find the group looking her way, then gently nudges Penny. The two had long since tuned out of the conversation on what to do tonight in favor of doodling pumpkins on Ruby’s notebook. But, now thrust back into the discussion, Ruby laughs nervously and rubs the back of her hair. Her silvery eyes look to Blake in confusion. “What, um… What was the question again?”

Weiss’ glare intensifies, warning Blake again not to try using her own girlfriends against her. Mostly because she, herself, knows that she can’t say no to either of them. Especially if Ruby uses her stupid, dumb, cute face to ask nicely. It’s a warning that goes completely unheeded and Blake smiles victoriously at her successful workaround. “We’re deciding what to do tonight. I suggested we go to a real haunted house. Thoughts?”

Ruby seems to consider this a moment, biting the back of her pen and occasionally filling in a few
shading lines on her cute little pumpkin drawing. “I guess it could be pretty fun. Better than, like, a big, crowded party or something. Could be a really creepy place! What do you think, Penny?”

Penny tilts her head oddly. “Hm. I have never been to a haunted house, before… It would certainly be an interesting experience.”

Blake turns her head to Weiss with a smug expression. Two more for her cause. Weiss rolls her eyes and Jaune speaks up from where he’s sitting. “Umm, hate to jump in and be ‘that guy’, but, uh… How is this anymore legal than Nora’s pumpkin smashing thing?”

“It’s perfectly legal, guys…” Nora mumbles.

“.Uh-huh. But, like, we can’t just trespass on private property! That’ll get us into way deeper hot water than smashing a few pumpkins.” He says, expression one of concern. Pyrrha nods with him and looks back to Blake for an answer.

Blake shrugs. “Because it’s not private property. No one owns that plot of land, not even the town. No one has owned or inhabited that house for the last hundred years or so. So, we wouldn’t be trespassing on anyone. Completely legal.”

Weiss huffs again. “I highly doubt that.”

“I came across it on a walk in the forest and looked it up in the town’s history, Weiss. I did my research. If any of you doubt me, just look it up yourselves. You’ll see that I’m right. If you come along, I’ll even tell you some of the story behind it~”

Pyrrha smiles and nods, judging Blake to be telling the truth. “That works for me!”

Jaune rubs the back of his head. “…Yeah, okay.”

“Sounds spooky! Let’s do it!” Nora adds, finally having a viable option that wasn’t her own.

“N-Now, wait a minute-”

“I think it’s decided, Weiss.”

The alabaster girl glances around and finds that the decision seems to be unanimously in favor of heading out to Blake’s haunted house. She doesn’t seem very happy about it, but her only other option is to just sit around at home. And, she looks even less enthused to do that. She gives a dramatic groan. “Oh, fine. Since this entire group seems to have collectively lost their minds, we’ll go look around in this so-called ‘haunted house’.~” She says with a frown.

Ruby giggles softly and reaches her hand out for Weiss’. She wiggles her fingers cheekily and Weiss rolls her eyes. She ends up taking them, though, because of course she does. No girlfriend could resist a hand-holdy Ruby. “C’mon, Weiss! Spooky old place, walking around like a ghost hunter!”

“I hate that show.”

“Everyone does! But, it might inspire my comic, too! You know that spooky part I’m trying to get reference for? Nothing like the real thing to inspire you! I be it’ll be fuuuuuun!”

“Oh, fine. Since this entire group seems to have collectively lost their minds, we’ll go look around in this so-called ‘haunted house’.~” She says with a frown.

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“Or, we could just end up tromping around a filthy, dusty house and jumping at our own shadows.” Weiss mutters, though her tone clearly showed that her resistance to such a thing is breaking down. Especially when Penny slips her hand atop both of theirs and smiles excitedly at her. Weiss lets out
a withering sigh and looks like she’s about ready to pass out from how red her face is suddenly getting.

“Fine, fine, we’ll go, okay?!” She squeaks.

Yang can’t help but grin. Oh, Weiss was whipped hard~

And, she very clearly loved them both to pieces. She’s sure that their relationship wouldn’t have worked in the slightest if she didn’t. And, it seemed to be the same in all directions. All three of them had a rather cute and immense affection for the other in some way or another. The crux of this relationship appeared to be Ruby, around which both Weiss and Penny seemed to revolve. That’s pretty much how the relationship started. Both Weiss and Penny vying for Ruby’s affections. Ruby had posed the question ‘why not both?’ and had somehow walked away with two girlfriends. When Yang had first been told of this, she had been immediately concerned. Polyamorous relationships were… hard, sometimes, and she just didn’t want to see any of the girls get hurt.

But, much to her surprise and happiness, the three worked out exceptionally well. They clearly had been friends beforehand and that transitioned right into a romance that had everyone squealing at the cuteness of. Between Ruby’s adorableness, Penny’s overwhelming enthusiasm, and Weiss being such a gay disaster that she can’t touch either of their hands without blushing all the way to her chest… you had a couple that was just the sweetest thing ever. All because Ruby had spoken up.

Yang frowns slightly. She has to admit that jealousy slightly bubbles up when she thinks about that. Ruby was so much more courageous than her. Rather than just let things happen or pick a decision that would make her unhappy, she directly confronted her real feelings and came away happier than ever. Sure, Yang was a big thrillseeker and could easily dive into something if she thought it would get her heart pumping. She was brave, but when it came to the idea of telling her OWN crush how she felt…? She was more than a little lacking in that regard. Why couldn’t she just do it? Why did Blake leave her so tongue-tied and useless? Especially when she was so outgoing, usually?

This particular line of questioning leads her to slowly look toward Blake once more. That’s a mistake.

Blake is looking at Weiss with a coy smile. She’s clearly amused that her plan had worked exactly how she’d wanted it to. Her soft (at least Yang imagines they’re soft), kissable lips are curled so gently that her smile is almost hidden. Her amber eyes shine with the light of the room, as well as from her deviousness. And, her ears are perked high and playful, twitching every now and again. Her bangs bounce cutely when she tilts her head. Yang’s cheeks feel warm and she is definitely fucked for looking over here.

How much longer could she keep this up? If she wanted to keep Blake as a friend, she couldn’t keep dodging her forever. But, at the same time, she could barely get through a conversation without making herself look like an ass.

Her mouth goes dry as Blake notices her looking at her again. Those shiny, amber eyes slip into her gaze and right through her soul. Her mouth falls open slightly and she gulps quietly. Blake just smiles at her, clearly still happy that her plan is going through the way she wanted. Yang only manages to give a feeble thumb up before she quickly looks away, blonde hair swishing as she does so. She forces herself not to look at Blake and not to further make an idiot out of herself. She can briefly see the look of confusion and concern pass through Blake’s features as she does so.
She hopes Blake doesn’t ask what was wrong. What the hell was she supposed to say?

Oh, what’s wrong? Sorry, Belladonna, I was just thinking about how kissable your lips are and how incredibly hot I find you? Yeah, that would SURE go over well, wouldn’t it?

She can feel Blake looking at her. But, she doesn’t turn to face her. She can’t. If she does, her face is going to light up like a jack o’ lantern. She starts lightly tapping the metal of her prosthetic on the table, a nervous tic she’s had for quite a while now.

“W-Well, anyway.” Weiss says rather loudly and, for once, Yang is glad that Weiss likes to direct conversations. Her rather big mouth is a natural attention-grabber and Blake finally takes her gaze from the side of Yang’s head. Thank you, you wonderful white-haired blabbermouth. “With all that excitement out of the way, I think we should make plans for next week, while we’re all here. After all, that big test is coming up and we need to organize study groups-”

Another collective groan goes through about half the table.

Yang is very happy to see her bed and wastes no time in flopping right down onto it. Her hair falls thickly over her face and she lazily starts stripping out of her shirt. It’s not a hundred percent lazy, however, as it still takes some fiddling to get her faux arm out of her sleeve. Once she gets it off and tosses it haphazardly across the room, she starts slipping the harness of her prosthetic off her shoulders. She places it carefully onto the bed beside her after she shrugs them off. She debates for a moment on keeping the sock on her arm before deciding it could use some air and pulling it off, too. As she suspected, her arm is pretty sweaty. Probably from all that Blake-looking she was doing earlier.

That all done, she lets out a sigh as she flops back and closes her eyes. “For fuck’s sake.”

She can hear Ruby giggle as she steps inside the room and tosses her backpack on her own bed. The two girls shared a room. Mostly because their house had few actual rooms in it and only one floor. The kitchen and living room were basically all one area, with two bedrooms and one bathroom. The girls had opted to take one of the rooms for themselves when they first moved in, leaving their parents to the other.

Despite the fact they were two completely different kinds of people, they shared the room well. They both used to be rather messy, but that had cleared up on Ruby’s side real quick when Weiss started dating her. The time she had sat down on a pair of Ruby’s underwear had nearly done the poor girl in. Ever since that day, Ruby has been vigilant about keeping her side squeaky clean. All organized and neat, clothes in her little dresser and books and games tucked neatly away. She had little drawings doodled on her wall that looked like cute, cartoony versions of her and her girlfriends holding hands. Overall, very cute.

Yang’s side of the room was a sort of… organized chaos. Yeah…

Her stuff may LOOK haphazardly placed, but she knew where everything was! That pile was her shirts. That pile stuffed into her dresser was underwear. Her wrestling gear was hanging on her closet door. Her laptop was plugged in and charging over there. Little relics of the past sit on her desk… Okay, THAT pile of clothes could probably use a wash.

Overall, though, she knew right where to find everything right now and changing it would set her off-balance.
“Everything okay, sis?” Ruby asks as she meanders to her dresser and starts looking through it for something to wear tonight. The blonde can hear her shuffling around and making cute little noises of consideration. “You were kinda… fidgety and uncomfortable looking the whole way home.”

“Maybe I was just gagging at that makeout sesh you had with Weiss before we left.”

The redhead splutters and nearly drops whatever she had in her hand. An embarrassed squeal comes from her as she whips around to look at her grinning sister. Yang pops one eye open to give her a smug look and Ruby pouts, blushing brightly. “Th-That wasn’t making out, they were… really long kisses! No tongue!”

“Uh-huh.”

“Super serious!”

“You were all over each other, sis. If I hadn’t walked around that corner, Weiss would have already had her hand squeezing your-”

“Yang!” The resulting squeak comes loudly, making the blonde hum.

“Pshhh~ Relax, Rubes, I’m just messin’ with you.” She chuckles, putting her arms behind her head in a casual manner. How could she be a proper big sister and NOT tease her little sis about her romances? It had to be the first rule of the big sister handbook. “You guys are super cute together, so don’t sweat it.”

Ruby grumbles and fiddles with the sweatshirt she’s taken into her hand. “Doesn’t make it any less embarrassing when you just bring it up… And, it started out as just a little kiss goodbye, I swear! But, then Weiss got into it and Penny just kept goading her and adding fuel to the fire and, and you’re dodging my question! Why were you acting so weird and mopey?”

Yang bites her lip. “It’s… nothing, Ruby. Just a long day, lots of moving my arm, y’know? Got kinda sweaty in there and that always puts me in a funk. Skin gets all irritated n’ shit.”

Thankfully, Ruby seems to buy that and sends a sympathetic smile to her sister. She walks over to Yang’s bed and plops down. She gives a gentle pat to the blonde’s knee. “Oh, I’m sorry… Maybe you could give it a rest for tonight? Doctor said you didn’t need to wear it all the time, right?” She says as she glances at Yang’s stump. “Maybe put the sock on it so it doesn’t get cold, though. I heard tonight’s gonna be kinda chilly.”

She looks at the sock, then wrinkles her nose. “Er… Maybe a different one.”

Yang chuckles. “Yeah, probably. I can do most things one-handed, anyway. It’s no biggie. Maybe I’ll use that Halloween sock to be all festive.” She props herself up on her elbows and smiles at her sister. “But, enough about my very festive arm, the big question is… how are YOU going to dress for your girls, tonight, hmmm?”

Ruby plays with the garment in her hands and holds it up with a sweet, innocent little smile. It’s a rather plain red sweatshirt, one that has obvious signs of wear by this point. “Well, I, um… I kinda figured I was gonna wear this cus it was gonna be cold.. But, do you think it’s too plain? Maybe I should… I dunno… dress up a little more or… something…? I wouldn’t wanna be, like, boring or anything.”

Dammit, did those two have the best girlfriend ever or what?

Yang reaches up to tussle Ruby’s hair. “Don’t sweat it. Whatever you wear, I bet they’re gonna eat
Ruby ignores that last comment and just makes a happy hum in response. Then, she hops up off Yang’s bed and glances down at her with a small smirk. “You better hurry up and get dressed, too, if we want to get there in time. And, I kiiiiinda doubt you wanna just run around in your bra in October.”

“Says who? Maybe I will.” Yang replies as Ruby playfully rolls her eyes and walks back over to her dresser. Yang runs a hand through her messy hair with a sigh, then purses her lips. An evil grin stretches across her face and she slowly looks back toward Ruby. The redhead seems to sense this and slowly turns her head to look at her sister with a raised eyebrow. She really shouldn’t, but… How can she resist?

“After all, it’s a pretty… bra-d attire, right~?”

A low groan of suffering comes from Ruby’s mouth as she turns back to put her FULL attention on picking out her clothing and pointedly stares at it. “Yang… that wasn’t even good.”

“Are you kidding? It’s the breast pun I’ve made all day~”

“Yang, I’m literally begging you.”

That gets a snort out of the blonde and she lazily waves her hand. “Fine, fine, since you had to go and beg… Well, that and you’re the cutest lil’ sis a girl could ask for.”

Ruby gives a little snort of laughter, herself, and throws one of Yang’s Halloween socks at her. “Oh, shut up and get your shirt on, Yang.”

“Yeah, yeah…”

“Oh, yeah, Penny said she’d meet us here, if that’s alright? Weiss said she’ll meet us down at the park with everyone else.” The redhead says, starting to quickly change her clothes. She’s very speedy, considering that she’s done by the time Yang has lazily kicked her pants off.

“Fine by me.” She replies, only to hear the doorbell ring outside the room. Ruby’s eyes light up and she squeaks a happy ‘that’s her!’ before dashing out of the room. The speed of her exit causes the door to shut behind her and leaves Yang by herself in the room. She flops back down with a sigh as her toes idly poke at her discarded pants.

She really did want to go to this house, but… She was really worried that she was going to screw something up while she was there. Do something stupid. Say something stupid. It was getting harder and harder for this current situation to keep going. Something had to give when it came to Blake. And, if Ruby had noticed how fidgety she was, then Blake definitely knew something was up. Not that she’d been exactly subtle, but Blake was a lot more perceptive than her sister. Just in time for these kinds of thoughts, a light ‘ping’ comes from her phone. She winces and reaches into the pocket of her pants and fishes it out.

Just as she expected and feared, it’s from Blake.

*Hey, I haven’t seen you in a while… And, today you seemed… off. Is everything okay? You know you can talk to me, right?*

She bites her lip. She was worried. Of course she was worried. Yang had been acting like a total idiot these past couple weeks. She’d gone out of her way to avoid being alone with the girl and it was obviously going to be noticed eventually. People liked to think Blake didn’t care because she
was pretty antisocial and reclusive to most people, but in truth she had a big heart. Especially to the right people.

She decides to tap out a quick response. Anything’s better than nothing at all, right?

totes okay! just a lil distracted is all. see u there k? ur place better be spooky! :3

With that, she tosses her phone back onto the bed and hopes that seemed convincing enough. She goes about starting to change into fresh clothes, all the while taking a few calming breaths to herself. This was just an outing with friends to a spooky, abandoned house in the dead of Halloween night. Nothing to get all bent out of shape about. She was fine. She could do this. She wasn’t going to make a complete ass out of herself like earlier.

She holds her breath.

Then groans.

“Yeah, right.”

She hears Ruby calling from the living room (Penny cutely mirroring her tone and inflection right after her) and presses her lips together as she slips her phone into the pocket of the black jacket she throws on. “...Right...” She says, taking another breath she hopes will calm her down. “Let’s go.”
“Hello, Yang!” Penny’s voice loudly calls out from across the room. She didn’t really have to yell to have Yang hear her, but excitable was just sort of Penny’s default state when it came to people she liked. Yang was happy that she could be counted among the people the ginger-haired girl liked that much. Of course… one of the people she liked the MOST was currently taking a quick step back and blushing as she brushes herself off. Oh, they’d definitely been doing some little smooches. Ruby clears her throat and gives a little wave.

Nice try, sis, I know you were snuggling.

“Hey, Penny. What’s up, girl?” The blonde replies as she closes the door to their room and steps up closer to the two. She gives the girl a casual wave, which Penny reciprocates despite being right next to her.

Penny was a bit of an odd girl in most respects. As far as Yang had known, the girl hadn’t really had any friends before Ruby had all but pulled her into their friend group. It had sort of just happened one day. Ruby burst into the lunch room, dragging the poor, lanky girl behind her. Beaming, she had announced that she had made a new friend and her name was ‘Penny Polendina’. Yang hadn’t even heard of her before that. Which… apparently was kind of a sad truth. Before their group, Penny didn’t really hang around anywhere. She was by herself more often than not. Anyone who DID notice her in the crowd were often put-off by her somewhat eccentric personality. Her manner of speaking was also strange, annunciations on certain words not rolling off her tongue the best. This combined with her excitable nature caused a lot of people to awkwardly avoid her.

Well, except bullies. They had a goddamn field day.

They’d make fun of the way she moved and talked. How ‘creepy her eyes were’. How she just seemed like a robot in a human body. And, the poor girl was way too nice to defend herself.

Ruby had put a stop to that real quick by bringing her into the fold. If there was one thing you didn’t want to do, it was piss off Ruby’s particular friend group. You’d never find a group more willing and able to rise up and protect a victim of bullying than them. Especially when one of their own had a valued interest in them. Ruby had told them all they needed to know.

And, the next time they came around, Nora and Yang were waiting to trounce their asses thoroughly. She really bets they would think twice about laughing the next time the shortstack and the cripple threaten them bodily harm. Considering the fact she hadn’t heard a peep from them in a good, long time… she thinks the message got through loud and clear.

Though she’d never think of these things in a teasing way, Yang had to admit that Penny was the most unique person she’d ever met. Most people had something they kept to themselves. A secret, a little white lie, something private that only they would know about. Penny Polendina had nothing like that about her. She was incredibly genuine and sweet, but she could be almost brutally honest when speaking. She could see how that might irk an unprepared person. But, to Yang, it was pretty refreshing. Someone who was entirely honest and wore all their emotions on their sleeve.

She wishes she was a bit more like Penny, honestly. Maybe then she could just say something to Blake without worrying so much.

Penny certainly didn’t seem worried about keeping her big smile right on Yang, bouncing slightly
on her heels. “The ceiling is up!” She gasps excitedly.

The blonde can’t help but snicker, placing her hands on her hips and cocking her head slightly. “Close, but no cigar.”

“Aw..”

“I meant how you were doing since I saw ya last.” She says, then tapping her chin gently with her fingers. “I mean... I guess it wasn’t that long ago, but, uh... I bet you did something in that time frame, right?”

“Oh. Oh! Well, yes! After I cheered Weiss on for taking charge in the make-out session-”

“Penny! I-It wasn’t!!”

The girl blinks at her girlfriend. “Oh? I thought an open-mouthed kiss with tongue was making out? Was I incorrect? I do not do it, so I mix up the terms, sometimes...” She asks with genuine curiosity.

Ruby’s face was lighting up with a blush that was steadily beginning to turn the color of her sweatshirt. She even has to cover her face with her hood when Yang can’t help the delighted cackle that comes from her lips. “Oh my god, Penny, please...” She squeaks in embarrassment, Penny smiling sheepishly and gently putting an arm around the girl’s shoulder.

Clearly she knows she said something embarrassing, as she quickly changes the subject.

“And, then I went home and sat on my bed for approximately ten minutes! In that time, I told my father I was going out tonight, he gave me a snack, and, I received ten messages. One was from Ruby telling me I could meet you here! The next was also from Ruby, reminding me where your house was so I didn’t get lost! Then, Weiss sent me a comment, which turned into a chain discussion of what kind of lip balm Ruby was using! Weiss commented that it was very tasty and asked me if I helped pick it out-”

“A-And, that’s good right there, Penny!” Ruby steps in, cutting the taller girl off with a teeny kiss to the chin. Penny’s attention is briefly taken by the little smooch and she stops right in her line of thought to make a little cooing sound and rub her forehead down against Ruby’s. Her hands gently slip down to hold Ruby’s. And, as Yang wipes tears of laughter from her eyes, she can officially say that this is the cutest thing ever. She bets people could die from this sort of sweetness.

Then, Ruby bites her lip just a touch, mumbling a quiet question. “So... She really did like it?”

“I believe so. I do not think she would have discussed it with me, otherwise-”

“Penny, I totally owe you one. You’re the best! Mwa~”

And, then, Ruby gives her girlfriend another little smooch on the cheek, having to stand up on her tiptoes in order to do it. Penny seems to enjoy that, giving the tiny redhead a big hug and lifting her up a little. Yang can’t help the... slight feeling of envy that bubbles up as she watches this. Again, Ruby was showing how much... braver she was than Yang herself. Here she was, giving Penny smooches without any kind of fear, In front of her sister, even.

And, she couldn’t even muster up more than gurgles when it came to Blake. Yang Xiao Long, you’re such a chickenshit.

She clears her throat lightly. “Sooo, uhhh... You guys need another hour or are we good to go? Not
that this isn’t completely adorable and everything.” She says with a little smile.

Ruby lightly pops off Penny’s cheek and shakes her head. “N-No, we’re fine! We can go!”

This October seemed chillier than most, for some reason. Yang’s not really sure why that is. It certainly makes tonight seem more… haunting, if you will. Or, maybe that was just the chill of a cold breeze going right up her spine. You never really could tell. Despite all being clad in coats and sweatshirts, that breeze seems intent on pushing right through them regardless. After a shiver and a ping of gratitude that Ruby had reminded her of the sock for her arm, she looks up to the two girls in front of her. “Jeez, guess winter’s coming early, eh? Brrr. Gimmie back summer, sun, and tanlines any day.”

Penny nods and glances back as she and Ruby cutely swing their joined hands together. They’d been walking like that for a good few feet after Penny had insisted on holding hands with a smile and a blush. Apparently it was ‘too cold’ for Ruby to have her hands unoccupied. “It has been surprisingly cold in the last few weeks. Abnormally so, even.”

The ginger-haired girl frowns a little bit. “I do hope Weiss decided to dress warmly. She is… rather thin. I would hate to see her get a chill. And, she is often too proud to accept my jacket, despite needing it. And, that bad habit of just… wearing skirts all the time. A cute skirt will definitely not protect her from the wind.”

“Well, that’s Weiss for ya. Fashion first…” Ruby says with a nervous laugh, seeming to really hope that doesn’t have to happen. She’d hate to have to forcibly shove her girlfriend into a warm article of clothing again. Especially not after the Snuggie Incident. “Maybe she’ll wear that coat with the fur on the hood… Keep her top warm, at least?”

At this point, Yang starts to kind of tune them out. Not that hearing the discussion of what kinds of warm articles Weiss should be wearing isn’t a fascinating view into the life of a rich girl. But, she didn’t really need or care to hear it all that much. She trails behind enough to keep her sister in view, but far back enough that she can keep out of their cutesy conversation. She sighs, gently scratching the soft fabric at the end of her bad arm. She’s kinda glad she didn’t haul her arm all the way out here. The metal and plastic would get pretty cold out here in this weather. And, an unpleasantness to add on top of an already existing unpleasantness was so not something she wanted to deal with right now.

She looks up at the night sky with a sigh, watching the stars sparkle dimly from the blackness. The moon is high in the sky, casting a dull pall down onto the sidewalk. Aside from the light sounds of conversation ahead of her, the world is strangely… quiet. It’s weird. It’s like there’s nobody around on this side of the neighborhood. No trick or treaters, no cars, no late night drunk wanderers, nothing. She’s unsure whether it’s a peaceful silence or an unnerving one, to be honest.

She’s so focused on which of the two it is that she shrieks loudly when her phone buzzes in her pocket. Penny and Ruby look back suddenly with wide eyes, her sister’s holding a bit of worry in them. She gives them a shaky thumb’s up and they go back to their conversation after making sure she’s alright. She takes her phone out and unlocks the screen, a new message from Blake appearing immediately.

*Alright, I get it. Whatever’s bothering you, you don’t want to talk about it. That’s fine, I won’t press. Just... remember. If you ever need to talk, I’m there for you, okay? Even if it’s just someone to listen.*
She groans quietly. Of course she’d seen right through that. And, with the way she was talking, it seemed like she was concerned about something more serious than what the reason was. Because the real reason was just stupid. The real reason was just her not knowing how to express what she felt, of being too nervous to take a step and it starting to negatively affect her relationship. She almost laughs aloud at the absurdity of it all. She’s running a hand through her hair, trying to come up with something to say when another message pops up.

*Btw, the house is definitely spooky. Guaranteed to creep Weiss out big time. ;3*

And, that’s something she can latch onto with some filler bullshit. Just… completely circumvent the prior conversation entirely. Even though she desperately wants to type something else. This was how she was handling it. Maybe just trying to be her usual goofy self will help her be able to look Blake in the eyes again. Remind her that they’re just best friends that goof around. And, that she’s not a complete coward and idiot for letting it get this far.

*Guarantee? Ohhh, Belladonna~ u always know the best places. can’t wait to go all ghost hunter & maybe scare the pants off weiss. maybe skirt? girls dunno yet.*

Blake replies back.

*Come and find out. How far out are you guys?*

*Should be there soon.*

*Kay, cya there.*

Now, if she could just talk to Blake like that normally, everything would be perfectly fine. Then again, phone messages didn’t accurately portray just how cool Blake was in real life. Or, how soft her lips are as she speaks and *WHY IS SHE THINKING OF HER LIPS AGAIN?!*

She shoves her phone back in her jacket with a frustrated huff and a blush steadily spreading across her cheeks. She notices that, in the time she had taken to deliberate over those messages, Penny and Ruby had gotten pretty far ahead of her. She should double-time it if she wants to catch up. Call her superstitious, but she really doesn’t want to be left behind on a night like this. Besides, maybe talking to them would help to cool her face down a little bit. Worth a try!

“Hey guys,” She says, jogging up and thinking of a random topic to get her mind of things. “How come Weiss didn’t meet up at our house, too?”

Ruby jumps a bit, having nearly forgot Yang was there with how quiet she was being. Not even a single pun the whole way! “Oh, uh… Maybe she spent a bunch of time picking out what to wear? She does that, sometimes. She also lives on pretty much the other side of town, so it was probably just easier for her to go right to the park. I think. Maybe? I haven’t actually been to her house?”

Yang raises her eyebrow. Come to think of it, Ruby and Penny never really stayed at Weiss’ house as long as they’d been together. Weiss only ever came to their house. Though, maybe the Rose-Xiao Long house was just a natural meeting point. “Huh…”

“Oh, look! Almost there!” Penny says, interrupting that particular train of thought as she points toward their destination a few blocks down. Blake had sent a mass text to all of them to meet up at Oum Park, where she would lead them onward to where the house was. Seeing how Blake was the only one who knew where this supposed house was, that was probably the smartest idea.

Oum Park was a pretty interesting place to visit. It was a rather large park with all the sorts of playground equipment that had kids and their parents coming in on afternoons for a bit of fun. It
had a round path that looped the park for people who wanted to jog around. It even had a little food place way off on a building to the side. All in all, it was the sort of nice park a community could use freely. The only odd thing about Oum Park was that it had a clearing that led into a rather thick amount of forest, blocked off by a fence to discourage little kids from wandering into it.

If she had to guess, that was where they’d be going. It would only make sense. Blake liked to wander those woods in her free time and her insinuations that this place was ‘out of the way’ only validated that idea. She’d walked with Blake in the forest a few times before, though she didn’t have near the proclivity of finding things that the other girl did. Nor did she really care to go that deep inside. Blake had the seeming love of getting into places that people either couldn’t find, weren’t aware of, or didn’t want people inside. It certainly didn’t hurt that she was flexible as all hell and….

Oh.

Oh, shit, is she ever in trouble.

They reach the rather simple and cute entrance to the park, that being just a simple stone walkway leading off the sidewalk and inside. Just to the side, a small, white pedestal reads ‘Keep Moving Forward’, a small symbol of a circle with the shadows of birds flying through it just underneath. Yang can’t help but smile at that a bit as she walks by it, entering the park proper after a few steps.

As they come closer to the center, they can see several familiar forms hanging out on the playground equipment. Seeing how it was a cool, Halloween night, there obviously weren’t kids playing on them at this time of night. Nope, that was the usual gang of idiots, all waiting around to start the tour. And, Yang can make out one voice already, louder than all the rest. Yup, Nora is excited and letting everyone know about it.

“Ahhhh, this is so exciting! We’re gonna film stuff and poke all around! Maybe we’ll see a ghost!” She says, bouncing up and down before all but attaching herself to Ren with a hug. She gasps. “Do you think we’ll see enough stuff that we can discuss on the Pod, tomorrow?”

“I thought we were reviewing Trick R’ Treat tomorrow.” He states calmly.

“Well, yeah, but… If we see a ghost, that’s gotta be a focal point, Ren! It’s an interesting story! Maybe we could have one of our friends as a guest!”

She can practically feel Weiss rolling her eyes as she speaks out next. “Nora, I’m betting the only ‘interesting story’ you’re going to get is dusty furniture and old rugs. News at eleven! This house is fucking old!” The girl says, coming into view as the three walk up closer.

Yang finds her teeth worrying at her lip as a calm voice suddenly speaks out amongst them. She glances upward to find Blake casually sitting atop the swing-set and smiling down at a pouting Weiss. “Ye of so little faith, Weiss.” Blake purrs softly, her tail casually wrapping around the metal structure she’s sitting on. “Don’t believe me? Even on tonight of all nights? Surely, you can feel it. Something’s… weird about tonight. Something’s… strange. It’s too still.”

Weiss scowls at the faunus. “The only ‘weird’ thing around here is the idiot sitting on the swing-set.”

“Oh. That really hits me where I- Yang.”

Weiss makes a confused expression at first, though nods in understanding as Blake hops off the swing-set and right down in front of Yang. All too soon, she’s aiming that charming smile right at
her. And, Yang’s pretty sure her knees are turning to jelly just from being in it’s radius. Blake is dressed rather simply, like all of them. Just a black hoodie and some ratty jeans. You wouldn’t think that would be an exceptionally hot look for someone, But Blake… more than pulls it off. The way it hugs her lithe form, emphasizing her hips and the way they seem to sway and lead down to even longer legs…

Mmph!

Well, let’s just say Yang’s glad it’s darker so her blush wasn’t so visible.

“Hey, Blake! W-We’re here!” Yang manages to say, her voice cracking more than a little as it bubbles out of her throat. What she had just said was incredibly obvious. She knows this. But, her brain is much more focused on the fact that Blake is coming closer and closer to her than it is on things like forming coherent sentences. Or, anything else, really.

To her credit, Blake doesn’t really address the fact that Yang was squeaking like she was an embarrassed pre-teen. In fact, all she does smile at her best friend. “..Noted. And, not a moment too soon. Nora was about ready to stage a mutiny over there.”

“Oh. Wow. Well, um.. Th-Thanks for.. not letting her do that.” She mumbles quietly, eyes slipping off Blake’s gaze. She pointedly avoids contact with her friend’s eyes. She can see that same look of confusion cross Blake’s face, her eyes slightly narrowing as she tries to figure out what’s going on. She steps right in close to the blonde, trying to look her in the eyes. She’s so close that Yang can smell the hint of lilac from Blake’s hair, lightly tinging it and making her heart do a summersault. Yang can’t help that her eyes slip back down to the amber looking so intently up at her,

Oh, fuck. This was it. She couldn’t do it.

She knew what was going to happen next. Blake was going to ask what was wrong. She had to. It was in Blake’s nature to want to help. She wouldn’t even make it particularly hard. All she would do was look up at her with those piercing eyes and softly ask her if she was alright. And, that would be it. She would spill everything. All her resistances would be shattered. It would be over. She couldn’t lose another person because of something stupid she’d done. She couldn’t. She starts to fidget with her jacket, Blake’s lips gently parting in worry.

“Yang…”

“B-Blake, I-”

“Weiss! You are wearing a skirt! And, pants At the same time!”

Both Yang and Blake quickly turn their heads toward the sound of the sudden noise. They find Penny lifting Weiss right up (shrieking in surprise and blushing the whole way) in a big, cuddly hug. Ruby watches with a grin as the shriek is immediately muffled by Penny’s sweater. Weiss appeared to have gone somewhat with the best of both worlds in her chosen garments. She did have a skirt, yes, but she also wore some rather thick-looking tights underneath said skirt. The deep black of the tights made the white, pleated skirt really stand out on her body. Add that to an equally white blouse and jacket and you had someone who looked like she was about to go out on the town instead of into an old, decrepit house. Her girlfriends apparently are quite taken by it. She… almost feels bad for the girl as Penny all but snuggles the life out of her.

Of course, as far as ways to die go, you could do a lot worse than being snuggled to death by Penny.
She’s glad for the distraction, as it lets her slip away from Blake because she’s sure she heard… Nora calling from… over there. Yeah.

She doesn’t even look back as she hurries over to where the ginger is talking animatedly with her boyfriend. If she looks back, she’ll just catch the concern in Blake’s eyes and feel even worse about all this. She has a rather chill conversation with the two, considering the fact that neither had known she was coming over AND she had just started talking about something randomly. Over the course of it, she somehow got roped into going onto Nora’s podcast as a guest.

She… has no idea how that happened, but she guesses this is just her life, now.

It’s probably some sort of punishment the world is giving her.

“So, we’ll either be talking about our experience in the house or about Trick R’ Treat, if Ren gets his way. Do you know that movie?”

“Ummm…”

She glances over her shoulder as she hears Blake speak up, flicking on her flashlight and casting it right across her face. It’s good that she did, as it was starting to get hard to see the others from even an arm’s distance. With Blake’s turned on, various different implements of casting light start flicking on as if everyone suddenly realized it was dark at the same time. She can’t help but smile at the way Blake’s voice comes out, dropping into a low and dramatic tone. “Alright, so have we got everyone who’s going? Flashlights or phones to light the way? Good. Good. You’ll need them. It’s only going to get darker as we go deeper into the forest. The more light the better~”

Jaune swallows thickly, casting a nervous look toward the forest that makes the faunus grin wider. Oh, Blake was loving this.

“Anyway. Let’s get going while the night’s still young. Follow me.” She says mysteriously, taking the lead and taking a few steps toward the forest before stopping short. Her tail swishes behind her casually, amber eyes looking right toward the group. “Oh, and… try and keep up. If you get lost in the forest, we might never hear from you again~”

Weiss pipes up from the back, clearly unimpressed with the performance. “I have yet to see something scarier, tonight, than your attempt at acting, Belladonna.”

That gets a laugh from the group, along with Nora giggling ‘buuuuuuuuuuuuuurn’ and holding a fist to the alabaster girl. Said girl simply smirks and bumps her fist to the other girl’s without looking away from Blake. The girl doesn’t seem to bothered by Weiss’ comment and merely shrugs at her. “I guess we’ll see, then, won’t we? Maybe you’ll change your tune. After all, it’s usually the dainty ones that get snatched first, right?”

Weiss just huffs and crosses her arms. “Hmph!”

They start on the journey from the park to the forest, hopping over the fence that provides a last barrier from entering the forest. As they enter the wooded area, the difference in terrain is noticeable immediately. Instead of the neatly trimmed grass of the park, the ground is uneven and the sounds of twigs and leaves popping and snapping under their feet becomes much more audible. There’s surprisingly no paths to or from anywhere. She’s surprised Blake can even tell where she’s going. Because, a lot of it just looks… the same?

Blake… does know where she’s going, right?
She bites her lip a bit as she slowly looks around. Yang wasn’t easily scared, but she had to admit that something about this forest was giving her the creeps, tonight. Was it the pitch black sky? The silence of the whole world aside from their own noises? That dusty light from the moon? The fact that she had to be on Nora’s podcast tomorrow? Honestly, take your pick. Any one of those was terrifying.

Blake sure picked a hell of an atmosphere for Halloween, that’s for sure.

She finds herself looking over to see how her friends are handling this sort of environment. Each of them seem to be handling it in a different way.

Nora is absolutely ecstatic about being here, buzzing with anticipation of catching something creepy. She’s taking footage of the forest on her phone, commenting how this or that might be hiding something in the shadows. She also keeps looking back to her boyfriend, putting her camera toward him and asking him whether they’ll see ‘a three headed poltergeist’. He comments that he’s not sure it works that way and giving other equally short replies. He keeps looking up at the moon. She’s not sure if it’s just her eyes playing tricks on her but, in the light of Nora’s phone, he almost looks a bit unnerved by it.

Jaune is definitely regretting every decision he’s made in his life that led him to this point. He keeps casting looks around the forest until he seems to get it in his head that maybe looking around so much would attract something to him. Pyrrha doesn’t seem to be having any such fear. To her, it looks to just be a rather peaceful walk at night. She always DID look at the bright side of things.

Penny is offering interesting little facts about the trees and of the leaves their feet are currently crunching through. Ruby’s at the center of the two girls, all of them obviously holding hands, and looking at Penny with an interested little smile. Weiss appears to be looking around in the most begrudgingly nervous fashion she’s ever seen. It’s like she knows that she looks nervous and hates every second of it. Yang decides to stop looking at her before she notices and hits her with a glare powerful enough to level a continent.

And, Blake? Well, Blake was leading them through the forest without a single fear at all. She’s not surprised. This is like Blake’s natural element. She keeps taking glances back to make sure everyone’s still following her as, much as she played it up earlier, she didn’t want anyone to fall behind or get lost. In the process of this, her eyes meet Yang’s… before they quickly turn away and she focuses her head back forward. Her ears flick and she just keeps moving ahead.

And, the Asshole of the Year Award goes to Yang Xiao Long.

They’ve been walking for a good amount of time when Weiss speaks up. “Blake, do you even know where you’re going? We’ve been walking for, like, thirty fucking minutes. You better not be getting us lost.” The girl says grumpily, glaring ahead at the faunus in question.

Blake turns around with a little smirk. “Oh? And, if I was?”

“I would shove that smirk so far up your ass you could kiss yourself.”

Blake laughs. “Fair enough. If I was ever dumb enough to get lost in this place, I wouldn’t blame you. But, we’re not lost. I know right where we are.”
The girl looks ahead and hums lightly, her tail swishing casually in the air. She gets a smile on her face and nods toward a rather thick bunch of trees. Just past them, there looks to be some sort of clearing. It’s kind of hard to tell from where they’re standing, but Blake seems enthused by it. “As a matter of fact, we’re here.”

The group comes to a stop and Blake looks to them with a subtle smile. “I hope you’re all ready for this, because I assure you.. this place is the real deal. Legitimate haunting. Whispers in the hallways, temperature spikes, moving furniture… the works. So, if that sounds like it’s going to be too much for you, you can wait right out here. No one’s going to judge you. We’ll be back.”

She looks around for any takers. There’s no replies, either because they want to go inside or because they don’t want to be just left out here in the forest. Blake grins. “Nice. Well, let’s go face our fears, then, shall we?”
Chapter 3

With everyone set on going in, they step through that patch of trees and out into a clearing of sorts. The grass is a little taller here, some remnant of what used to be a quite expansive yard. And, it leads right up to the very house that Blake had been hyping up this whole time. And, the group as a whole can’t help but gasp at the sight of it. The breeze seemed to be working against them in a certain respect. As, right as it comes into full view, a chill runs down all their collective spines. It certainly made it feel like their bodies were having a natural rejection to the sight. And, it just served to make it all the more intimidating.

It really was surprising that no one had claimed it, to be honest. It was a large, fancy house with clear Gothic influences all over it. And, considering how unusual that was for their town, you’d think the rich folks would be tripping over themselves for the chance to own it. Sure, it wasn’t some sort of grandiose cathedral or anything, but it was still tall and impressive in it’s own right. And, it was only a short thirty minute walk from the park, right?

It gets leaner the more you looked, ending in a tall spire that feels like it’s piercing right into the night sky. Below the spire had to be the creepy attic, which was a requirement to all spooky old houses. There are plenty of intricate details and arched windows, the moon reflecting off brightly designed stained glass. Ruby’s already marveling at the gargoyles she’s spotted at the sides of the house, looking down at them with judging eyes and cracked, stone visages. The gargoyles kind of sum up the majority of what’s wrong with this place. The disrepair.

This house clearly hadn’t been touched in a very long time.

For all of the fancy, and likely expensive, aspects to it, none of it has been maintained. Cracks fragment the tiles of the roof. The gorgeous stain glass windows have chunks missing, where the wind whistles and howls through them. Whatever paint was on the outside has long since peeled away from the elements, falling where they may on the ground. The porch and stairs leading up to the front door have big, gaping holes in some spots. They’d have to be careful walking around on it. Though, maybe the holes had more to do with the junk sitting on the porch than anything. It looks almost as if someone got halfway through either moving in or out and just left before it was finished.

It’s definitely spooky, but also almost… sad. A big, beautiful house just left forgotten in the woods to decay. If houses could speak, it looked like it had many tales it could tell.

Yang’s mouth quirks into something of a frown. “Kinda depressing.”

She hears movement next to her, Blake nodding slowly. “A venerable house, opulent and imperial… forgotten and left to rot where none can see.”

“You and your eloquent words.”

Blake only replies with a small smirk, then starts walking toward the porch. The movement of her tail naturally draws Yang’s eyes a little lower, only to snap back up and look completely forward. Damn it, why did Blake have to just sashay everywhere?

To distract herself from pretty much shamelessly ogling her friend’s ass, she looks back at her sister. She’s still looking at the gargoyles with rapt attention. Weiss is, too, but both her arms have wrapped around one of Ruby’s and she doesn’t look to thrilled with how it’s looking down at her. She could swear Weiss was shivering. “Wow, Weiss, isn’t that cool? Look at all the detail in the
sculpting! I bet, when it was brand new, it looked awesome!”

“Y-Yes, well. I… I don’t care for it.”

Ruby looks down from the stone being, noting the rather uncomfortable expression on her face, and leans in to give her a reassuring smooch on the cheek. She even nudges Penny, who had been leaning way back to look up at the top of the spire, and nods her head toward Weiss. Understanding immediately, Penny slips over to Weiss’ other side to also give her cheek a little kiss. Ruby smiles and gently nuzzles her girlfriend. “Aw, c’mon, Weiss! They’re not scary, they’re funny! And, they’re supposed to ward off bad spirits!”

“And, in the cathedrals they were known for inhabiting, they were simply grotesques with spouts installed to keep rain water from running down the masonry. It would ruin the mortar between the masonry and cause much damage! They did not want that! So, they’re just really fancy rooftop gutters, I guess! Not sure these ones are, though… They might be more for decoration, but maybe-”

Weiss actually lets out something of a laugh at that. Especially since her girlfriends are trying so very hard to reassure her that everything was going to be just fine, especially Penny’s explanation about what they were actually used for. That allowed her brain to return to it’s more rational side. They were just fancy storm drains made of stone, what was there to be worried about? She leans over to peck a kiss against each of their cheeks. “Alright, alright, I get it. Nothing to be afraid of, there, I get it.”

Blake, who had previously been looking at the porch, glances over to the others with a smile. But, particularly over to the three. “You know, it’s pretty funny you should mention those gargoyles. They’re pretty nice, right? Almost…. Too nice. And, more than that, they’re incredibly expensive. Shouldn’t some rich socialite have snatched this place up in the blink of an eye? It should pretty much a rich person’s wet dream, right? So, why is it abandoned out here? Why was it left to fall apart out here? Out of sight and out of mind? Well, it was…”

Nora is immediately pointing her camera at Blake. “Ohhh, I’m guessing there’s story, here~? Come on, Blake, give us the goods!”

Blake snickers at Nora’s excitement. “Well, this place used to be really hot on the market, as you might expect. It was an old, gothic-style house in the area of OUR town. And, more importantly, it was expensive. What rich person wouldn’t go for it, even just to show off with the price tag alone?”

Weiss levels a glance at the old house. She frowns. “Honestly, I’m surprised my father didn’t try and grab it.”

“Well, perhaps he heard about the rumors that came out of it. The town’s got plenty of them, even though no one seems to remember it when it’s discussed. Every owner that has ever owned this has eventually started complaining about a constant feeling of being watched. A constant… sorrowful presence around them. A constant feeling that seemed to follow into every room and hang over them like an overwhelming shroud of sadness and anger. You know, along with the problems I mentioned earlier. Most people moved out not soon after moving in. If they even FINISHED moving in.”

Yang can’t help the small smile that comes to her face as she sees how into this Blake is getting. The shininess of her eyes, the smile on her face, her swishing, swaying tail… She was enjoying telling this tale quite a bit. And, if there was anything that Blake loved more than squeezing into places that she shouldn’t, it was telling a good story. She always got more excitable when doing so,
more giddy and eager. Most people probably didn’t even know Blake could emote in this way. But, Yang was all too familiar with the fact that Blake had an eagerness for storytelling. To hear a good story and pass it on. She always ends up smiling and she can’t help the fact that she does now.

From true crime to urban legends, Blake had an immense amount of knowledge.

“So, this place came to hold a superstitious stigma, all but cursed to stand lonely in the forest. A forgotten wonder hidden away. Mm.. Was it forgotten, though? Or, does everyone just not want to remember it? What happened in the past to give it such a foreboding presence? I suppose we stand to find out this day, don’t we…?” Blake says, then beginning to step up to the porch with confident steps. The others follow along behind her, all with differing stages of concern. Yang brings up the rear, looking back at the forest as she steps through the tall, unkempt grass.

For some reason, the dark, creepy forest almost seems friendlier.

Now stepping up to the broad expanse of the porch, the blonde begins to take a look around. The junk on the porch seems to be a lot more numerous than when she was farther back. Old chairs, broken statues, a bunch of discarded gardening equipment, some boxes full of who knows what… Yes, she supposes that’s pretty much standard fare for a spooky house. Add a few creepy as fuck broken dolls in rocking chairs and you’d be all set. Well, at least it has a bunch of nasty looking old cobwebs hanging from the building. They sway in the breeze, moonlight filtering through them like old, thin sheets.

She wrinkles her nose. Those are the kinds of cobwebs that crunch when you go through them.

Her eyes snap up from where she’d been looking when she hears a grunt and a loud creak. Blake’s had to push the door open with a large thrust from her shoulder. The blonde feels her heart flutter a bit more at the… rather strong display. Blake rubs her arm and pushes the door open further, stepping inside the house. “I… guess it’s not used to being opened, hm?”

“Ohhh, maybe it’s trying to keep us out! Like someone put a ghosty curse on it or something!”

“I don’t think that’s how it works, Nora.”

“Man, this place is creepy...”

“Penny, please stick close to us. I don’t want you tripping over anything.”

“Okay, Weiss~!”

They all step into what appears to be a large foyer. Much like the porch, there’s a bunch of boxes in random spots of the area. Like someone had been in the process of moving in and just disappeared halfway through. Beyond the large room, it splits off into several other rooms and hallways, as well as a flight of stairs that leads up further into the house. They can still hear the wind from outside, howling against the side of the structure.

And, then the door slams shut behind them loudly. Yang, herself, nearly jumps out of her skin. Weiss shrieks loudly. The wind continues to cause the house to creak and groan, because that wasn’t unsettling or anything.

Nora, however, doesn’t seem phased by the creepy atmosphere or the slamming door and, instead, begins to zip eagerly around the foyer. Her pink boots clatter around the old, wood floors, causing the floors to creak in protest of the sudden and enthusiastic motions.”Sweeeeeet~! This is totally the creepiest place I’ve ever been before! Hey, Ren, who do you think would be standing in that doorway over there if we were in a horror movie? Hockey mask machete guy? Sweater-wearing
burn victim? Dancing eldritch cloooown~?

“Well-

She suddenly spins around and looks at her friends with a grin. A friend grinning at you should be a nice experience, but the one that Nora is giving them is just downright suspicious. “Hehe~ Ya know what’s gotta happen, now, right~?” The ginger asks with a waggle of her eyebrows.

Jaune shifts uncomfortably and rubs the back of his neck. “...Why do I get the feeling like I’m not going to like this…?”

Ignoring him, she puts her hands on her hips and puffs her chest out proudly. She looks as though she was just struck with a particular chord of brilliance and can’t get over how awesome her idea is. Though, when it comes to Nora’s ‘brilliance’, it often meant that it was going to be the most crazy and illogical idea ever. Usually, something ended up getting smashed. Though, Yang would admit that her craziness made the parties she threw something pretty spectacular. “We gotta split up into teams! That way we can get the whole spooky, haunted house experience!”

Poor Jaune sighs and almost physically deflates as the idea is eagerly brought up. “Yeah… Knew I wasn’t going to like it...”

“Aw, c’mon guys, it’d be so cool! We’ll, like, split into groups and spread out around the house! We’ll investigate for, like, thirty minutes and then come back here to share our findings! If anyone find a ghost or a sign of hauntings in their area, we’ll all come back and focus on that area! It’s the perfect plan! And, so efficient!” Nora says enthusiastically, not even waiting for anyone to voice any disapproval before she starts giving points to her various friends.

“Let’s seeee… We’ll go by these teams! Me and Ren, ‘cus, OBVS. Jaune and Pyrrha...”

Yang feels herself stiffen lightly, feeling like she knows where Nora is going with this. Nora was obviously going to be pairing the couples together, as well best friends most likely. She knew just where this was going to end. And, she didn’t think she could handle that right now. With all the weirdness going on between them right now... Especially since she could barely stand to look at Blake without her face heating up or even talk more than a sentence without putting her foot in her mouth... This was probably the worst position she could be in. She winces and closes her eyes, face screwing up for the inevitable.

“Wait, what?

Her eyes open back up with surprise. Had that really just happened? Could she really weasel her way out of trying to handle her feelings one more time? She almost smiles, despite how terrible that is. On one hand, she’s pretty much avoiding Blake like the plague save for a few small interactions. But, on the other, she can’t stand the idea of what she might do if left alone with Blake for too long. Her, alone with Blake and her unrestrained words? Not a good idea. She very nearly sighs in relief until...

“Excuse you.”

Yang’s eyes nearly bulge out of their sockets, looking around to see about the poutiest look on Weiss’ face. Weiss, no, wait...

“I may sometimes enjoy Yang’s company, yes. But, if I am going to be exploring a nasty, dusty, decrepit, and potentially visually intriguing location, I would much prefer to do it with my
girlfriends. After all, they’re the only reason I even bothered to come in the first place. And, if Ruby’s going to be sketching and Penny’s going to be giving out interesting facts on the mold that is likely infesting this place… I want to hear and see every single moment of that. Besides, in this group, I stand the chance of getting kisses. End of story.” She says as she defiantly crosses her arms, giving the blonde a vague glance. “No offense to you, of course, Yang.”

“N-None taken…” She replies, biting her lip once more. Well, that was pretty much her last shot. Just get a hold of yourself, Xiao Long, it’ll probably be fine.

“Fine, whatever, I just thought it’d be interesting! Don’t get all pouty! You three can go together. Guess that just leaves the besties to go together, then!” Nora replies, then begins pointing around in various directions. “Hmmm, okay! Me and Ren will check things out over there, Pyrrha and Jaune that way… Ruby, Weiss, and Penny? Look around for something that might lead into a basement! If there’s something creepy going on, fifty-fifty that it’s in the basement.”

“Why would you send us down there, then-”

“And, Blake and Yang, you go upstairs!” She says, clapping her hands together with a grin. “So, everyone got their assignments?”

A reluctant sound goes through a few of them.

“Good! Let’s get going, then! C’mon, baby, let’s go find some spooks!” The ginger replies, giving a scarily witch-like cackle as she drags her boyfriend off to go ‘find some ectoplasm’. Ren doesn’t seem to have any arguments or statements about this, merely giving the group a wave as he disappears into the blackness of another room. To be honest, Nora’s enthusiasm could potentially be the scariest thing they had to deal with here.

Everyone’s silent for a moment.

“How long do you think we have before they start fucking?” Weiss asks with dulled eyes. Pyrrha clears her throat. “Depending on how much this ghost stuff keeps her attention, possibly not long.”

“Wunderbar.” Weiss mutters under her breath, rolling her eyes.

Jaune rubs the back of his neck. “Well, at least we know if we hear moaning, it’s not a ghost? Maybe.” He says, eyes suddenly darting around nervously. “Right?”

Pyrrha gently places a strong hand on his shoulder, smiling at him. “Relax. Everything will be fine.” She says, then shrugging at the rest of them. “Well, I suppose we might as well do it how Nora wanted. It’s only half an hour, anyway. We’ll all be back before we know it!”

Pyrrha and her optimism, she swears.

“Just be careful. I’m willing to bet not everything here is the most structurally sound.”

With that, she and Jaune set off into the blackness of another room. About the only thing that shows that they’re still around is the lights of phones and flashlights drifting out of the room as they move around. That just leaves the remaining five standing around in the foyer together, just sort of waiting for one another to go.

“Alright, Ruby, lead the way.” Weiss suddenly states.
“W-What? Why me!?”

“Because me and Penny and especially me are delicate flowers who need protecting. Plus, in a list of proper heights in ascending order, it would go thusly. You, me, then Penny. It’s only natural.” Weiss says simply, only to send a glare Blake’s way when the faunus laughs.

She’s leaning on the railing of the staircase and smirking at the girl. She’s completely casual about it, as she had been for the whole journey here. The environment of this place doesn’t seem to bother her at all. “Scared of a few spooks, after all, Weiss?”

“No! There is no such thing as ghosts, Blake. But, what if this place were the home of some sort of deranged meth addict? It could happen! Where would we be, then? The scariest thing you can face is reality!”

“W-What?! Then, why would you put me in front of you?!”

“Because, out of the three of us, you have the quickest and meanest right hook. Certainly not because I want to bring up neither the front or the rear. There is no such thing as ghosts, Blake.” She says with a growl, noticing that Blake is trying very hard to cover up her mouth with her hand. Even Yang is having trouble keeping it in, at this point. She can’t help it. A big laugh escapes, Blake losing control and letting out a snort along with her. “Ugh! You two are the worst! Come on, girls. We have… places of dubious dust quantity to ‘explore’.

They all clomp off to look for a basement to explore, leaving Yang to just stand around with Blake. Her laughter slowly starts to come to an end and she rubs the back of her neck. “So, um… guess it’s just us, then, huh?”

“Guess so. Just like old times, Yang.” Blake replies as her eyes flit up toward the stairs. Honestly, she can probably see up there a lot better than Yang, herself, can. Faunus, especially cat faunus in particular, have very good eyesight at night. Maybe that’s why she wasn’t particularly frightened by anything in here. She looks back down at Yang and a smile slips onto her face. Again, that silky, black hair frames the dark skin of her face. And, Yang can’t help but stare once more. She looks… gorgeous. Even in a dingy house. “Ladies, first.”

“Saying you’re not a lady?” Yang asks after letting out a small, calming breath to slow her suddenly hammering heart. This is what she needed to do. Just banter and talk normally. It was fine. It was normal. They were just two friends walking through a very old, possibly haunted house. Well, okay, maybe that wasn’t entirely ‘normal’, but it was a good thing for them. Letting herself focus on that makes her feel a little less nervous and she lets a bit of her snark out as a result. “Besides, if you’re trying to scare me, you’re gonna have to try a lot harder than stairs, Belladonna.”

Blake saunters up behind her and gives a push to the back with her palm. “I always try my hardest, Yang. Now, get your ass moving before I make you move.”

“How would you do that?”

“I have plenty of ways.”

Well, didn’t that just imply all sorts of things?

Her boots make every tentative step on the stairs creak and complain, as if her very weight might be too much for it to take. She doesn’t hear any snapping, though, so she decides to just keep up her careful stepping. She finally lets out a chuckle as she reaches the top of the stairs, walking out
into a little hallway. Blake’s near-silent steps meet her as she turns around. “Sheesh, damn steps sure know how to make a girl feel heavy, huh?”

“Well, I doubt they’ve ever had such a tall, muscular girl on them before.” Blake comments as she fishes a small flashlight out of her sweatshirt pocket. Clicking it on just reveals more of the same sort of thing. Few boxes, dusty wood… and some awful, ugly rugs that should be a crime to own. Seriously, whoever sold those should be put to death on fashion crimes. “Looks like more of the same, down the hallway. Come on, maybe there’s something more interesting down there.”

“You know, I’m starting to think the scariest thing about this place is it’s fashion sense.”

“Oh, Coco would definitely want to burn this place to the ground for the rugs alone.”

“I’d pay to see that.”

The light from Blake’s flashlight drifts over various areas in the hallway, but none of it’s worth any particular merit or attention. It’s mostly just a lot of the same kind of stuff that they saw in the foyer. Looking through each individual box would just be pointless, especially if it was just a bunch of the things they saw on the porch. An amount of silence goes over them as they move through the house. About the only thing heard between them is the creaking of the floorboards and the sound of Yang’s boots. It’s not an… awkward silence, per say, but it definitely felt like one or both of them were on the verge of speaking up. Like they wanted to talk, but didn’t know how to start.

And, as the moments tick away, the inevitability of further conversation becomes more and more likely. So, Yang decides to try and get it off on the right foot. Just a normal conversation.

“Hey, Blake-”

“Yang-”

Yang looks to find that Blake had turned to look over her shoulder at the blonde, seeming equally surprised that Yang had spoken up. They stare at each other for a few moments before laughing quietly.

Blake always looks especially beautiful when she laughs. They were always soft and quiet, easily missed if you weren’t paying attention. There in an instant, gone in a flash. She’s very reserved when it comes to laughing. So much so that she could count the number of times that Blake has laughed out loud on one hand. Mostly because she couldn’t really count on the other one, but hey. The true laughs of Blake Belladonna were something that only a few of her good friends had seen. And, Yang was lucky enough to have been around or the cause of most of them.

Her smiles are more common, but mostly the same. Small and subtle until something that really makes her happy comes along, where it was easily the biggest, happiest smile that Yang had ever seen.

Blake shakes her head, turning around to fully face Yang as her cute laugh dies down. “You first.”

“Oh, uh… Well, I was prolly just gonna say a pun or something.” She admits lamely.

“Go for it.” Blake replies as she turns herself back around, starting to walk down the hallway again. She seems… glad to be talking again, even as they’re walking around and looking mostly at nothing. It makes her feel bad that they haven’t done so in a while. She supposes Blake doesn’t really have the kind of friendship she has with Yang with anyone else. She makes a mental note to try harder.
“Hmm… Lemmie think of an appropriate one.” She says as she taps her finger to her chin carefully. “Kay, I got one. What is a ghost’s favorite dinner?”

“Mm. I dunno, Yang, what is a ghost’s favorite dinner?”

“Spook-ghetti, of course~”

“Ugh. Gods, that’s terrible.” Blake laughs, only for her ears to suddenly perk up and her steps to stop completely. Noting this, Yang moves to step around the girl to peek at what’s got her so interested. Her eyebrows quirk up at the sight, admitting that her own interest was peaked.

It was a door. The only door they’d come across in walking this entire hallway.

As Blake steps forward to jostle the knob, Yang tilts her head. “Huh. Well, that’s a weird place to put a door. How come the rest of the hallway didn’t have any…?”

“Dunno.. Hm. Wonder if there’s something inside.” Blake murmurs, frowning at the door’s refusal to open. “It’s locked. Who locks a door inside their own house? I bet only someone with something to hide would lock a door for no reason... Maybe I can pick it.”

“Blake Belladonna, delinquent extraordinaire.” Yang says with a little smirk, leaning herself on a wall as she watches Blake crouch down in front of the door handle. Not only does that give a rather… great view of her ass, she also pokes her tongue out in concentration. Might as well just add that to the list of many things, both adorable and cool, that make her so damn easy to fall in love with.

“You know me. Love getting into places I shouldn’t.”

“I know ya do. Honestly, I bet you could get into just about anywhere you wanted, huh?” She says, looking down to find Blake looking at her with a… smirk. And, her eyelids are slowly lowering. There’s something… about Blake’s expression that is making her face feel very, very hot. It’s like those eyes are embers, blazing right through into her soul.

There’s the sudden sound of a lock clicking.

Yang’s eyes leave her gaze only to look at the door but, in that single moment, Blake has stood and closed the distance between them. The blonde almost yelps when her eyes come back and find Blake right in her face. She’s looking at Yang curiously, eyes drifting over her face. She can feel a deep blush bubbling up to the surface and staining her cheeks. The closeness just takes everything she finds attractive about her friend’s face and multiplies it. What… Why is she so close? She’s too close!

Seemingly done with her observation, Blake leans back just the slightest bit. “For the record? Yeah. I could get into anywhere I wanted, Yang. All I need is the motivation.”

“O-Oh, r-really?” Yang manages to choke out.

“Yes. See that door? Wide open.”

Yang looks past her to see that the old door has started to slowly creak open. “O-Oh. Wow. Yeah, um… t-totally open. Wide. Wide open, yeah. G-Good work.”

“Mhm.” Blake murmurs in confirmation, taking one last look over Yang’s face before moving back out of her personal space. She has a smile on her face as she does so, turning around toward the open door. “Now, how about we see what was hiding behind this big, bad door, shall we?”
Yang is only able to manage a slightly wheezy ‘okay’ at that.

Breathe. Air is good. Yes.

Blake nods and moves into the room past the doorway as Yang tries to take a moment and get a hold of herself. She has pretty much no idea what the hell just happened there. That curious way Blake was looking at her… Like she was trying to find something in her face. What was that all about? And, that whole ‘motivation’ thing? And, that… look she gave her? Was that just a coincidence or was that something she could go off of?

She blinked. Did Blake know?

Did she have a chance? Was Blake… waiting for her to make a move? Or, was this just an excuse Yang was making for herself?

More importantly… Did Yang have the guts to take a chance?
“Yang, what are you still doing out there? Are you going to come and explore or do I have to come back out there and drag you inside?” Blake calls out from inside the new room, snapping the blonde out of her brief, though numerous, thoughts. Wow, she really needs to quit zoning out and focus, here. Not only on whatever… hints or not hints might be being dropped here, but on the fact that they were in a thoroughly unfamiliar place. While Weiss’ weird excuse of ‘meth addicts’ being an obvious stand-in for her seemingly quite broad fear of ghosts, it wasn’t a bad idea to keep your eye out.

It was an old place. And, if it was as old as it seemed, it was probably a little dangerous to walk in some places. As Pyrrha had said, ’structurally unsound’. That probably meant very old and rotten floorboards in some places. Ones that meant you were going through the floor, if you were unlucky enough to put the right weight on them. And, she didn’t really feel like going through a floor today. Shockingly, ‘getting put in the hospital again’ wasn’t really high on her bucket list. She imagines most people with common sense would be of a similar mind.

“Yeah, yeah, I’m comin’. Keep your pants on, girl.”

Or, off?

Shut up.

She steps past the doorway, having to duck her head down a little to fit into it properly. Blake is investigating a large, antique desk at the far end of the room. A cursory glance reveals the room to be some sort of bedroom. A large double bed with lavender sheets and silky drapes sits against the back wall, looking… actually rather comfortable. Well, comfortable, if you didn’t count the layer of dust coating the sheets and the general smell of being very old. “Huh… Well, I guess somebody had to live here at some point, right?”

“Mhm.” Blake mutters from the desk. She’s shifting through a couple papers sitting haphazardly on top of it, ears twitching and perking.

“Heh. You think, if we find skeletons, there will have been some… boning going on~?”

Blake slowly turns her head around, flashlight shining under her face. It’d be terrifying if that little frown of hers wasn’t so cute. “Okay, I think I’ve reached the pun limit for today.”

“Blake, there’s no such thing as a pun limit, when I’m around.”

She sighs, shaking her head. Yang can swear she sees the… ghost of a smile on the girl’s lips. “Yeah, I know. No harm trying, though, right?”
“So, what’d you find on the desk?” Yang asks, taking one last look at the bed before clomping over to where Blake is standing. She peeks curiously over her shoulder. “Anything interesting? Spooky pictures of little girls with way too much hair? Ancient nudes from the former owners? Box of century-old Pumpkin Pete’s?”

Blake rolls her eyes and playfully swats the blonde’s arm with her tail. “Nothing quite so exciting, I’m afraid. It looks like a bunch of letters or… documents? I can’t tell. The writing is complete chickenscratch. Totally illegible. Maybe it was… something personal?”

“What, like their diary or something? Three guesses the first entry says something like ‘By Jove! Joanne flashed me a bit of ankle, today! Mayhaps she’s wearing only three layers of clothing today~ How tantalizing and naughty~’. My heart’s all atwitter~”

Blake laughs, but forgoes the swat of her tail for a hard sock to the shoulder. “Behave.”

“I’ll try. You know my style of humor is spontaneity.” She replies, taking some of the papers up into her hand to investigate herself. Just as Blake had said, it was completely unreadable. It looked like the hasty scrawlings of a madman. Like the person who wrote them didn’t even know what they were writing at the time. She gives Blake a light nudge with her stump. “Shit, you weren’t kidding. This handwriting looks like ass. Looks like it was written, like, super quick or something? Wonder if it was important or just… Meh…? Maybe they’re house deeds or something.”

“Pretty sure deeds to a house would have to be neater than that, Yang.”

“Well, ya never know.” She says as she tosses the documents back down on the desk. Blake has already turned around to investigate more of the room while the blonde had been skimming the papers. She seems to have been drawn to a large bookshelf with wide, curious eyes. To Yang, it just looked much like a dust-choked shelf with… ancient, ancient books sitting neatly on it. Almost too neat, for how haphazard most of the rest of the house is.

Of course, Blake wastes no time in striding right up to the bookshelf. Her fingers gently drift along the spines and a slow smile comes to her lips. And, what a pretty smile it is. Shit. Why did she have to have such a gorgeous smile right now? Not that her normal smiles weren’t incredibly beautiful, but the one she has on now is just… reflecting her curiosity and desire for knowledge. It is the most Blake smile that she’d ever seen.

This place was right up her alley. Now, it was probably less of a haunted house and more of a library that Blake was going to steal all the books from.

“Check out this bookshelf…” The girl nearly purrs, turning around to grin at Yang.

“Nah, I don’t think I need to. You’re almost on second base with it.” She says as she walks up to the bookshelf, earning a punch in the shoulder and a laugh from the faunus.

“Shut up, you asshole.”

“Hey, if you’re booksexual, that’s fine. No judging from me.”

She feels comfortable with this. Maybe it’s the way their banter has always flowed so easily between them. Maybe it’s the fact that Blake… might be interested? Or, maybe she just forgot how much fun it was to be around the girl. Either way, through this slew of emotions she has, she finds that she’s… really enjoying herself.

Blake rolls her eyes as her fingers brush the dust off the book’s spines, smirking. “Well, there’s nothing wrong with a good smut story and a night to yourself.”
“Ummm, too much info there, Blake.”

“Too much info? Or, not enough- Hm?” Blake starts to say, Yang able to feel her smirk broaden. But, the intrigued sound that comes from her lips interrupts what she was about to say. A particular book that Blake had been interested enough in to pull out had made a loud ‘click’ sound as she’d done so. She pulls it all the way out and blinks at the shelf as it starts to move slowly sideways. She steps back and watches it open up.

They both wince a bit as it scrapes across the floor, Blake’s kitty ears nearly flattening to her head in response. By the time it’s finished, it has revealed a set of upward steps. It’s nearly pitch black inside this strange, secret passage they’ve stumbled upon. But, a cursory glance with the flashlight reveals that the steps appear to be made of solid stone. They’re caked with a layer of thick dust; the flat parts are rife with large cracks and signs of obvious wear. Blake points her flashlight up the path, but it seems to go on long enough to not have anything to reflect the light off of.

They both stare in silence for a moment. Yang is the first one to talk.

“You’ve gotta be shitting me.”

“No kidding.”

“What are we in, Scooby Doo? What kind of house has a fuckin’ sliding fake bookcase?”

“I don’t know…” Blake says, though slowly starts turning toward Yang. Her amber eyes hold a wild, excited air about them, something very familiar when they used to explore around. Her voice comes out hushed and excited. Her ears perk back up and her tail swishes back and forth. “Want to see where it goes?”

Yang bites her lip.

“…Like I’m gonna be able to say no to that face.” She mutters. She puts her hand on her hip and takes one last look up into what the flashlight’s able to illuminate. It’s not much. Most of what’s ahead of them is just pitch blackness. Anyone with common sense probably wouldn’t do this. But, then again, when had Yang Xiao Long ever had any sense in the first place? “Sure, let’s walk up the creepy steps behind a secret bookcase in abandoned house in the middle of a forest. Don’t see how that could go wrong in the slightest. See what sort of weirdo goodies we can find. I’m guessing… animal skulls arranged on a pentagram?”

“Who knows? That’s what makes it exciting~” Blake grins, immediately moving up the stairs and giving… Well, a rather spectacular view of her ass. For being a rather lithe girl, Blake had some hips. Yang has to shake herself out of that and follow the rapidly disappearing light source. Didn’t want to get left behind here, of all places. Just… focus on something else.

Like her legs. Or that cute tail.

Shit.

“Alright, but if I see any stick figures attached to the wall, I’m outta here.”

“Noted.”

She thinks back to what Blake had started saying when she was looking over the books. Obviously, she had been teasing in a very Blake way. But, once again, it seemed obvious that she was showing her interest. But, she’s never explicitly said anything about the two… going out… or getting romantic. Was she waiting for Yang? Did she just like seeing the blonde squirm? She has a feeling
they’re going to have… a lot to talk about after this whole adventure.

Yeah, that’s it. After this, she’s going to tell her how she feels! She’s-

“Wah!” The blonde yells out as she suddenly slips forward on one of the stairs. With no railing and only one hand to brace herself, it looked like she was going to get a nasty smack on the stairs with at least part of her head. She closes her eyes and curls up, bracing for it… only to find her body pressed against something warm. Her eyes peek open.

Blake smiles back at her, the flashlight illuminating her face warmly. Her eyelids lower gently, thick lashes sweeping down. She somehow managed to move back down the stairs and catch her before she fell all the way forward. Of course, that now meant her chin was square on her chest and- “Careful. The dust is making the stone a bit slippery.”

Damn it, she can feel her face. It’s absolutely on fire.

“K-Kay.”

Blake releases a content hum, then helps the blonde stand up fully. “Let’s keep moving. You okay?”

“Peachy.” She wheezes as she braces herself on the wall with her good arm. Blake looks her up and down for a moment before seemingly deciding she’s alright. She starts walking up again, albeit a bit slower so Yang can keep up. The blonde makes sure to be careful with her feet placement to avoid a repeat of moments ago. When she gets a good rhythm going, she starts to look up again. Cobwebs litter this part of the stony staircase. They stretch from wall to wall and drift down where they’re walking, littering the area. Blake breaks them up with swishes of her hands or her flashlight.

The way behind them is continually swallowed up by blackness. It leaves little other option than to keep going forward. Their steps echo loudly in the small stairway and continue on for what seems like forever. It makes Yang wonder just how high these things go up. Sure, the house was pretty tall, but was it… this tall? It didn’t feel like it. Needing to take her mind of both this confusing idea in her head and Blake’s backside AND the what just happened, she decides some small talk is order.

“So. How do you think Weiss is handling this?”

“Hm. Well, based on how hesitant she was to come inside, I would say that she’s probably flinching at every creak and groan the house makes. Probably not exploring as much as just counting down the minutes until she can leave. Maybe jumping into Penny or Ruby’s arms.”

“Heh. Cuties.”

“You think? You know… I seem to remember you saying that you were going to be the big, stern sister with anyone who tried to date Ruby.”

“Psh. Yeah, but that’s too hard to do. And, also? Have you seen them? And, how happy they make each other? Who would mess with that? Anyway, they’re really good for each other. If anything, I’m kinda jealous.”

“Oh?”

“They got together and made it work, despite everything. Considering how much each of them are so different. And, how they just… love each other. I kinda-”
“I’m sure you’ll find someone, Yang. Love can surprise you. Who knows? Might even be… closer than you think. Never know.” Blake says, voice growing just a little quieter with the last part. Before Yang can say anything to this very eye-opening piece of information, Blake stops dead. The blonde raises her eyebrow and peeks past Blake to where her flashlight is pointing.

“No way.”

Right in front of them is a completely solid wall.

Blake drifts her flashlight over it, finding no sort of obvious switch or handle. Yang scoffs incredulously. “Are you serious? All that pomp and circumstance just leads to… a wall? That doesn’t make any sense.”

“...Maybe it’s like the bookshelf? Perhaps it has a hidden switch or...”

“Maybe the people who owned this place just liked hanging out in staircases. Could be cool, I guess. I mean, if you’re the type of person who likes dust and cobwebs in your hair. I ain’t judging.” Yang replies, brushing a cobweb of her own out her hair with a slightly annoyed twitch of her eye. “Okay, I lied, I’m super judging and who the hell would want to do that?”

“Hush.” Blake says with a chuckle, turning to Yang. “Here, hold the flashlight, would you?”

“Gotcha.”

As the flashlight is handed back, the girl tries to keep up with Blake’s hands as she starts scouring the wall for something to help them out. A switch disguised as a protrusion. A hidden handle. Something. Anything that wouldn’t make them have to go back those stairs empty-handed. Yang sighs after a few minutes of this and leans her shoulder on the wall casually.

“Y’know, I think the architects just made this to fuck with- Guh!” She yelps, her shoulder suddenly pushing into a section of the wall. As it sinks in, the wall in front of Blake groans and starts to slide to the side like the bookcase did. The faunus whips around to look at Yang, who’s staring wide-eyed at what’s just happened.

“Yang! You did it!”

“Heh, yeah… Um... Totally meant to do that. Sure.” The girl says, then presses her lips together as the wall continues sliding. “There... had better be something cooler in here than more ugly rugs. Or, I’m gonna cry.”

“Could be their beloved ugly rug collection. The hidden nature of it was just to hide their shame.”

As the wall finishes it’s motion to the side, Blake peeks her head into the room that it’s revealed just past it. They’re only granted the sight of more cobwebs and darkness as Yang shines her light around. Blake squints, seeming to be able to make out that this is a rather large room with lots of... things in it. That’s more than Yang can tell without a flashlight. The two step tentatively into the room. And, Yang would be lying if she said that each creak of the floorboards and groan of the house didn’t set the hairs on the back of her neck on end. It felt like they weren’t supposed to be in here.

Not that she was going to let a silly feeling of apprehension scare her off, but still. It was something to take into consideration.

As they step further inside, the light helps shine in on the vague shapes that Blake could make out. Blake immediately lets out a gasp. It’s just... books. Shelves and shelves of books all over the
room. Some weren’t even on shelves, relegated to stacking themselves into piles on the floor. Poor Blake doesn’t seem to know where to go first. As, her feet start pattering around the room, taking her from pile to pile to shelf. “Yang! Look at all these! And no one even knows they’re here...”

“Well, they did think this place was haunted, right?”

“Likely left before they could explore fully, I would imagine. At least, that’s how the history goes. It’s just a shame. All these books just abandoned in an old... secret room?”

“Dunno what to tell ya. Guess that’s just how it... Whoa...” Yang murmurs, her flashlight having come upon a rather... enormous oil painting that’s hanging on the wall.

It’s a family.

A man and a woman with four children.

They’re dressed rather fancily, as one would expect from an old-timey painting. Lots of ruffles and detailing on their clothing. The man has darker skin and grey hair, despite looking rather young. His clothing has a lot of green and gold accents and his smile is a friendly one. Sort of reminds her of that soft look her dad gets when in remembrance of them as kids. The kids are pretty cute, too, dressed all fancy and beaming at whoever painted this. Lots of bows and braids and the like. Pretty much the works for rich kids.

The woman, however...

The woman is dressed in purple, though something makes it look darker than that. If she looks a certain way, it almost looks black in color. The same is true of her skin. It’s pale, yes, but when looked at from a certain point of view it almost becomes sickly so. Her blonde hair is done up nicely, a much more muted color than the golden locks Yang has, herself. Her pale blue eyes are on the border between motherly and piercing. And, Yang’s not quite sure she likes the feeling that this woman is judging her through a painting. Looking right through her and into her soul. If the hairs on her neck weren’t already on end, they certainly are at the maximum level of raised now.

“Wonder who these guys are.”

“Could be the previous owners. Maybe even the original owners, based on the state of this place. The woman, especially, seems to have an... importance about her.” Blake murmurs as she flips through one of the books in the current pile she’s investigating. “Perhaps this was a secret library she relaxed in. Maybe it’s a hiding place. Or, somewhere... private. What I do know is that no one has been up here for a very long time. I mean, the dust could tell you that, but these books... They’re old, Yang. This stuff is historical. Much of it is fairy tales and occult writings... Books about old magic and, and... and nobody knows about it!”

This creepy shit was definitely Blake’s thing. Yang won’t admit aloud that reading up on occult shit didn’t sound like her cup of tea, especially when Blake seems so interested in all this.

“Well, I mean... that’s not completely true.”

“Hm? What do you mean?”

“Well, we know about ‘em. And, since no one really owns this place or even wants it, how about we come back sometime? We could take the books over to your house. Then, you can decide what you wanna do with ‘em. Donate ‘em or... add them to that big book collection of yours. I’ll even help you carry ‘em out. How’s that sound-”
She’s interrupted by the feeling of Blake rising up and immediately wrapping her in a tight, excited hug. “You would do that?”

Her voice catches in her chest, words backing up into some sort of blob in her throat. Especially when Blake’s all hugging up against her like this. “O-Of course… What… What are friends for?”

“Friends?” Blake murmurs softly. It’s only then that she realizes how close Blake is to her. They’re hugging, yes, but Blake seems to have leaned up slightly in the time it took Yang to get her words out. It’s like when she slipped on the stairs, but much more intense. It’s not like Blake’s expression is helping any, either. Amber eyes are focused on lilac like they’re the only things in this room. Her eyelids are lowered once more, lips just gently parted. Her arm somehow comes to rest on the faunus’ waist.

It’s not until she can feel Blake’s breath gently brushing her own lips that she realizes that she’s been tilting her head down to meet her. Almost subconsciously. Like her body knows how much she wants to kiss Blake right now. And, judging by the look that Blake’s giving her, she doesn’t seem to be opposed at all. This becomes especially apparent when Blake’s lips softly brush against hers, Yang’s eyes going wide before nearly closing as Blake whispers. “Is that what you want to be?”

“B-Blake...” The blonde mumbles in response, her own lips just starting to brush in response…

When a terrified scream pierces the silence of the house.

The sudden, loud sound makes them both jump out of each other’s arms. They both pretty much scream in response, looking around wildly for the source. Two emotions immediately buzz through Yang’s body. Fear and disappointment. Fear on the subject of what that scream was and where on earth it came from. And, disappointment on… Well, the missed opportunity to kiss the girl she’s been crushing hard on for months. She had been so, so close to pulling the trigger on this!

Yang looks quickly to Blake, who appears to be beating down a flush on her dark cheeks in order to focus. Her ears twitch in the air. The blonde bites her bottom lip, worrying it between her teeth. “Um… Who… Who was that?”

Blake clears her throat. “I… The inflection sounded… like Weiss.”

“Weiss?” Yang questions, then narrows her eyes a little bit. Weiss was with Ruby, so that definitely had reason to cause Yang concern. Especially since Weiss was at her most comfortable around Ruby and Penny. “She sounded terrified, you don’t think…?”

“...We’d better go check to make sure she’s alright.”

Yang nods, starting toward the door to exit the room. Though, she turns around when she doesn’t hear Blake immediately follow behind her. Amber eyes meet lilac once more. Blake’s expression almost seems to be one of… frustration. “Yang.”

“Hm?”

“We have a lot I think we need to talk about. But, later. My place?”

She blushes a little and nods again. “...Feels like it. I’ll be there.”

With that, there’s no more conversation on their quick journey back down through the house. It takes a less time than their tentative journey all the way up, but feels more… awkward. There’s no witty banter between the two for a good while. Between the terrified nature of Weiss’ scream and
the teetering edge into something unknown in their relationship, there’s not really a whole lot to talk about.

By the time they reach the stairs in the lobby, they can already hear loud voices and see the lights of the girls’ flashlights. She can tell the voices apart, one being an almost hysterical Weiss and the other being a very concerned Ruby.

“Sie hat sich auf mich gestürzt! Die blasse Frau!”

“W-Weiss, calm down! A-Are you sure? Maybe it was just-”

“Ruby Rose, if you are telling me I imagined that, I am going to be very upset!”

She can hear Penny cut in, calmly trying to help. “In… the highly alert state you were in from Blake’s stories… Perhaps you were influenced by them? The human mind often sees what it believes is there in the dark… And, you did say you were tired, earlier. Perhaps the mixture-”

“Penny, not you, too! I-I swear I saw it!” Weiss insists, nearly choking out her words through tears that are starting to bubble in her eyes.

Yang and Blake make it to the bottom of the stairs, surveying the scene as the blonde speaks up. “You guys okay? We heard a scream-”

Ruby is biting her lip and playing with her hoodie strings nervously. “Yeah, we’re… okay-ish. Weiss said she saw a, um…”

“Einen Geist!” Weiss says loudly, cutting Ruby off completely before continuing in a wave of frantic, flustered German that seems to make her more and more upset. Yang has to wince at that. Weiss, for the most part, had picked up the English language with ease. Hell, she’d say that Weiss held a better grasp of the English language than most people who spoke it natively. There were only a couple instances where she’d slip back into her native tongue. Speaking with her sister (Yang assumed this meant her whole family, as well), when she was angry, when she was aroused (don’t ask how she knows that), and when she was freaked out.

And, based on the tone of her voice, Weiss was clearly freaking the fuck out.

She has no idea what the alabaster girl is saying, but she looks like she’s about to burst into open sobs any second. Yang looks worriedly to Ruby for clarification. The redhead bites her lip in response. “I, um… She’s speaking kinda fast, but um… She said she saw a ghost. And, it, um… It lunged at her. It was a pale… pale woman?”

Yang and Blake exchange glances briefly as Penny and Ruby quickly move to hug the other girl close. Ruby looks to the two seriously. “I hate to say this, but we should get everyone out of here. I don’t really know what happened, but… I’m not gonna make Weiss stay here. Not like this. This isn’t fun.”

“Agreed.” Blake murmurs from the blonde’s side, though she can barely hear her. Blake seems… shocked by the level that this is affecting Weiss. “Let’s go find the others, Yang. Ruby, Penny… get her on the porch or something. Just… out of here. We’ll be right back.”

Penny and Ruby nod, then carefully lead the other girl toward the door. Both are murmuring softly to her, which seems to help start to calm her down. Blake puts her hood up over her head, Yang briefly able to see how troubled she is before her face becomes hidden by the hood. “If I had known this was going to happen, I wouldn’t have suggested we come here. I… thought it would be fun…”
Yang’s hand gently touches to the girl’s shoulder and squeezes. “Hey… You didn’t know. It’s probably just all the spooky stuff getting to her head.”

“I guess.” Blake mutters. “I’ll have to make it up to her, somehow. I just wanted to creep her out, not fucking traumatize her.”

Yang frowns, glancing to the main doors as they shut behind the leaving trio. “Let’s… find the others, okay?”

“Alright.”

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