Birds of a Feather

by mysteriowo (actualgoblin)

Summary

When General Ironwood sends Ace Operative Clover Ebi to track down fugitives before they cause too much trouble, he expects just another job. He doesn't expect a group of teenagers tangled in a plot much bigger than Atlas, pursued by dark and dangerous forces. The more he learns, the more he starts to question Ironwood’s orders, and what the right decisions are.

He is totally not falling in love with Qrow Branwen.

Notes

So this is basically me trying to handle ch. 12. It hit me really hard, and not in a good way. So anyway, here’s this stupid lil au, basically a mix of RWBY and Star Wars. There will be more worldbuilding in later chapters, but each kingdom in the show is its own planet. This picks off right after Volume 6.

Shoutout to my best friend Anna for beta’ing this for me. Im so lucky she puts up with my bullshit <3
See the end of the work for more notes.
Fate and Fortune

Chapter Notes

So this is my way of dealing with ch. 12. Hopefully this is a little coherent. It's just a stupid lil au I thought up. It's basically a cross between RWBY and Star Wars. Each kingdom is its own planet. I'll do some more worldbuilding in the next few chapters but hopefully that helps lol.

Shoutout to my best friend Anna for beta'ing this and putting up with all my bullshit.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Clover glanced around the café, nursing a coffee and feeling out of place and very, very silly. It wasn’t the first place he would have looked for a group of criminals, but Atlas authorities had spent nearly a month scouring for them in known criminal hangouts and come up with nothing, so when an informant had told them their targets had been spotted in a small outpost town near Mantle, Ironwood had sent him straight there.

That would have been fine, if he had sent Clover in with any idea what these criminals looked like outside of how many there were (ten), and what they had done (stealing Atlas property, destroying anti-Grimm weapons, and conspiring against the kingdom). Clover had beaten worse odds, but he was going in without any backup because Ironwood couldn’t afford to send any other Ace Ops away.

He pulled out his scroll and flicked through the descriptions again, each grainy shot of surveillance footage supplemented by descriptions from the informant. None of it was particularly enlightening outside of battle. Their weapons were distinctive, but their faces were all covered in the footage.

One of them was a Faunus, though, and he could work with that. Female, late teens, long black hair, golden eyes, often seen with another young woman with long blonde hair. The report mentioned an older woman with mechanical eyes, but he doubted they would send someone so distinctive out in public, even outside of Mantle. There weren’t many spots they could be hiding though, so with a sigh he swallowed the rest of his coffee in one gulp and turned to get out of his chair, just in time to hear shouts of “Grimm!” from outside.

He sighed and stood, stepping outside into the cold sunlight. A few of the residents rushed past him, towards shelters and hiding places outposts like these on every planet in the system needed. He heard the Grimm before he saw them, three Megoliaths stomping across the open plains towards the settlement.

Shit.

He drew Kingfisher and started running to meet the Grimm head-on, hoping that his semblance let him pull some miracle out of his ass. Elm would have been nice to have at his back right now, or even Marrow. This situation was looking a little grim (heh), but complaining wouldn’t keep them away from the outpost. He threw Kingfisher’s line ahead of him, catching the tusks of one of them. He yanked himself forward, flying past its face, its tusk just barely missing his side as he twisted out of the way.
It screeched, turning to follow him, and the other two followed suit. That solved one problem, but now he had three very big, very angry problems running right at him. He ran to meet them head on, sliding under the middle’s foot as it stomped at him. He lashed out with Kingfisher, catching the left with the razor edge of the hook. It screamed, gouging its tusk into the middle’s shoulder in its fury.

The stupid thing didn’t die, just reared into the air and stomped down, shaking the ground and nearly sending Clover stumbling into the ground. He ducked under the left’s trunk as it swung at him, rolling forward and to his feet just in time for the right to swoop in and smack him. He went flying back, his aura flickering but holding, thankfully.

His thanks didn’t last long.

The middle Grimm roared and charged, too fast and too close for him to dodge. He cursed and rolled to his feet. He would have to roll right under it and hope it hadn’t learned from last time. He saw the other two start to turn back towards the outpost, so he reared back and hooked the end of Kingfisher’s line into the closest one’s flank and let it pull him out of the path of the charging Grimm. He was having too many close calls this fight, he needed to end it soon before something bad happened.

He yanked himself up the flank of the Grimm to where the hook was still embedded in its side and grabbed on to one of the bone plates protruding out of its skin. He jumped from plate to plate until he could climb onto its back and pulled the hook free to run up to its head. He drove the blade at the end of Kingfisher’s grip into the weak spot at the base of its skull and twisted until the Grimm cried out and tried to shake him. It shuddered and fell to its knees and started to turn to smoke underneath his feet.

He would have landed right in the path of the charging Grimm again had a burst of red not hit him with surprising force and carried him well out of its path. A trail of petals followed their path across the packed snow, ending at the feet of the young woman pulling a weapon off her back.

“Thanks,” he said.

“You’re welcome!” she said as she unfolded it into a scythe almost double her size. She buried the blade into the ground and started firing shots at the Grimm. Several others were darting around the two remaining Grimm, keeping their attention away from the outpost.

He dove back into the fray, joining the group that seemed to be having trouble with the larger, and probably older, Grimm. One of the young Huntsmen was calling out team attacks, and the Grimm seemed to be just keeping up with them as they chipped away at it.

“I’m taking out its legs!” Clover shouted.

The blond blinked in surprise, but he reacted quickly, calling out, “Nora, get back! Ren, distract it!”

The red-headed young woman darted away while the black-haired young man fired at its face. Clover took advantage of the distraction and threw Kingfisher’s line forward, wrapping it around its front foot. Before it could react and kick him halfway across Atlas, he started running in a circle around it. Every time it tried to turn to keep him from wrapping the line around its legs, the other three would renew their attack, firing round after round at its face.

“Nora, now!” the blond.
She whooped and charged forward, driving her hammer into its side with enough force to make Elm proud. It toppled over, sending a spray of snow and ice into the air. A man ran past him and stabbed his sword through its stomach. It thrashed once and then went still, dissolving into smoke.


“Please,” Clover said, resting Kingfisher against his shoulder. “I was lucky you showed up.”

The man pulling his sword out of the ground frowned, something flickering across his face too fast for Clover to read. Footsteps from behind him drew his attention to the four young Huntresses making their way across the disturbed snow towards him. He glanced at each one— the young woman in red who had practically tackled him, a young white-haired woman who looked remarkably like Winter Schnee, to the dark haired cat Faunus, to the tall blonde almost glued to her side.

Holy shit.

He wasn’t sure if this was his semblance or a strange twist of fate. Either way, he couldn’t let this opportunity slide past him. He smiled as he holstered Kingfisher, scanning the area just in case they missed any more Grimm.

“That was some impressive work,” he said. “Are you from around here?”

“No. We uh, came from Mistral,” the young woman in red said. She kicked at the snow and added, “We’re just passing through.”

It wasn’t uncommon for someone from Mistral to pass through, or even move to a whole new planet, especially after Beacon was attacked by a massive horde of Grimm a few years ago. If he hadn’t been actively looking for them, he wouldn’t have thought much of it.

“Odd choice for a destination,” he remarked.

“You’re here too,” the man said.

“Touche,” Clover said as he glanced over at him. “I’m Clover, by the way.”

“Qrow.” He turned on his heel and started back towards the settlement without another word.

“Don’t take it personally,” Nora advised. She elbowed Ren and grinned. “I’m just glad it wasn’t that scorpion creep this time.”

It took a second for her words to register, and when they did, he nearly did a double-take.

“Scorpion creep?” he asked.

“Yeah, he tried to kill my sister,” the blonde woman said, nudging the one in red.

“And us!” Nora added. “Poisoned Qrow too.”

“You don’t mean Tyrian Callows?”

“I think that’s his name?” the one in red answered, scrunching up her face in thought. “He won’t leave us alone.”

“Tyrian Callows the serial killer is after you?”
“Yeah.” She rubbed the back of her neck with a small laugh. “Wait. He’s a serial killer?”

“That surprises you why?” Ren asked.

That complicated things. Clover followed the group back to the settlement, only half-listening to their conversation. He had accomplished his mission and found the fugitives, all he had to do was call it in, but Callows had been on the wanted list for years, far longer than a group of teens, and for far worse crimes. If they might lead him to Callows, then he couldn’t pass up this opportunity, even if it meant spending more time around Qrow.

He was snapped out of his thoughts when the blonde woman elbowed him in the side.

“I asked why you’re so interested in that asshole anyway.”

“Qrow?”

The group burst into laughter.

“No, Tyrian,” she said.

“Oh.” He cleared his throat as if that could hide the blush rising to his cheeks. “I’m actually trying to arrest him.”

“Hey you can help us!” the woman in red exclaimed.

“Ruby, we don’t even know him,” Qrow said. “For all we know he could be-”

“Come on, Uncle Qrow, if he arrests Tyrian then we never have to see him again. Then we can like, actually relax a little,” the blonde said.

“Besides, we can take him,” Nora added. The teens nodded in agreement and Qrow sighed heavily. “Great, that’s settled, I’m hungry.”

Clover blinked once. Had they just done half his work for him? Qrow glared at him, as if he knew what Clover was thinking. He shrugged, as if to say, “What can you do?” Qrow sighed again and turned to follow the teens, leaving Clover to fall into step behind him. He reached into his pocket and pulled out his scroll to send a message to Ironwood.

*Going to be a bit longer than expected.*

Chapter End Notes

I head canon Clover as being a wee bit of a disaster even if he never shows it.
Qrow followed the kids back to the lodgings they were renting, stewing in his own thoughts. He wasn’t sulking, per se, just figuring out how to remind the kids that not every Huntsman or Huntress they came across could be trusted. After all, look what happened with Lionheart. They were lucky the random old lady they picked up turned out to be Maria fucking Calavera, Grimm Reaper, and very much on their side.

“Ruby!” he called, almost freezing in place as he realized they had completely forgotten about Maria, Oscar, and the relic. “Uh, go tell Oscar that we’re bringing a guest so he’s not too surprised.”

To emphasize his point, he rested a hand on his hip. She grinned and zipped off in a blur of red, leaving a trail of rose petals in her wake. He could feel Clover staring at him but he crossed his arms and kept his eyes straight ahead. It wasn’t like the man was ridiculously attractive. Qrow definitely hadn’t faltered as he and the kids charged into battle because Clover’s shirt did nothing to hide his muscles.

He glared at nothing in particular and stomped after the kids into the small house. Ruby was just slamming one of the cupboards shut as he and Clover walked in. She spun around and smiled, trying to look as innocent as possible. Oscar leaned against the table with one hand, as if he were trying to act natural. Only Maria looked remotely like she wasn’t hiding something.

When they walked in, she tapped the side of her eyes and squinted at Clover. He didn’t seem to have noticed her, raising an eyebrow at Ruby and Oscar. Qrow resisted the urge to facepalm in front of him.

“You didn’t tell me this Huntsman was such a fine young man,” Maria said.

“Maria!” Ruby shrieked.

“What? I’m old, not blind.”

“I think we have different definitions of young,” Jaune said.

“Are you calling me old?” Clover asked.

“Everyone is young when you’re as old as I am,” Maria retorted.

Jaune fumbled for an answer, blushing a faint pink, until Nora swooped in to save him by saying, “He’s not as old as Qrow.”

“Okay we’re done with this conversation,” Qrow said. He couldn’t bring himself to be mad as the kids dissolved into laughter. He glanced over at Clover, who seemed almost sad, but the expression was gone before Qrow could get a good look at it.
“I guess we should probably talk about Tyrian,” Ruby sighed. The mood sobered immediately and Weiss crossed her arms as she stared at Clover. He didn’t even flinch under the weight of the infamous Schnee glare.

“Why are you here looking for him?” she asked. “Has he been sighted nearby?”

“Allegedly.” Clover looked away from Weiss to glance over everyone in the room. “Where was the last place you saw him?”

“Halfway across the planet,” Ruby said. “Nora kinda threw him off a cliff.”

“Yes!” Nora piped up. “Though he’s survived worse.”

Clover set his scroll down on the table and pulled up a holographic map of the planet. He spun it with one finger and placed a green marker just east of the dots marking Atlas City and Mantle. “If this is where we are now, can you show me where you last saw him?”

Ruby squinted at the map, spinning it around a little before settling on a point. “Right here, I think.”

“No, no, it was definitely farther south. Don’t you remember getting stuck in that blizzard?” Yang asked. She pointed to a new spot, until Nora roughly shoved her away. “But we backtracked and then went straight west! It was right here!” she argued.

Behind them, Blake and Ren exchanged an exasperated look. Weiss groaned and muttered something unflattering under her breath as she approached the hologram. “The chasm is a spinoff of part of a larger system that runs through the open tundra. It was right here.”

She jabbed her finger into the hologram and placed another green marker. Clover inspected the map and nodded, tapping a finger on his chin. “That makes sense. Unfortunately, those aren’t as deep that far from the main canyon, and it has plenty of ledges that could have stopped his fall.”

“You know those canyons?” Weiss asked. “There’s not much out there to protect.”

Clover stiffened, barely enough to be noticeable.

“No, there’s not. Another Huntsman and I chased a pack of Grimm out there, and he got stuck in one of those canyons.” He shook his head, but a small smile tugged at the corner of his mouth. “Rookie mistake, stepping too close to the edge. Snow gave out. Should have heard him scream. Poor kid was teased for months.”

“We’ve all made that mistake,” Maria chuckled.

“Some more than others!” Nora said, slapping Jaune on the back. He glared at her, but she didn’t pay him any mind. Nobody else seemed to have noticed the Huntsman’s brief hesitation—he was hiding something, and Qrow would find out what.

“Try and think of a plan, but you should get some rest,” Clover said. “I’ll meet you down the street with some ideas of my own. Their coffee makes the cold a little more bearable.”

The kids waited until Clover had shut the door behind him before they exploded into conversation, bouncing ideas back and forth, retelling the fight to Oscar and Maria, and arguing over what to cook for dinner. Qrow rubbed a hand across his forehead to try and ward away the oncoming headache as he turned towards the door.
“I need some air. I’ll be back.”

Yang shot him a look, but he shook his head to reassure her that he really was just getting air. The door clicked shut behind him and after a quick glance to make sure the street was empty, he leaped off the steps and into the air.

The small black crow circled higher into the sky, leaving only a few small black feathers to drift down onto the ground.
Clover Questions His Sanity feat. Marrow

Chapter Notes

alternate title: Clover being a dork when he thinks no one is watching

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Clover shoved his hands into his pockets as he walked down the street to his own lodgings. The encounter played in his mind over and over as he tried to figure out why Tyrian Callows would be after them, and what reason they had to be in Atlas. Ironwood seemed to think they were here to undermine law and order on Atlas, but Clover hadn’t seen scheming criminals when he looked at them.

Movement out of the corner of his eye caught his attention, but when he looked towards it, all he saw was a solitary crow sitting on top of one of the buildings. He raised an eyebrow, a little surprised to see it this far north. “Are you all by yourself?” he asked it. It cocked its head at him and hopped a little on the edge of the roof.

His scroll rang, causing him to jump a little. He cleared his throat and glanced up and down the street to make sure nobody saw him talking to a bird and pulled it from his pocket. Marrow’s photo stared out at him- a picture the rookie had taken on Clover’s scroll when he had been stupid enough to fall asleep in the common room one night, of Marrow with his face scrunched up, and an angry Harriet in the background- and he groaned.

“You better have a good reason for calling me,” Clover said.

Marrow was silent for a moment.

“I heard you were going to be gone for a while,” he said eventually.

“Yes. I got a lead.” His voice turned teasing as he added, “You’re not going to miss me are you?”

“What? No!” Marrow yelped. “But Harriet is insufferable when you’re not here.”

“Oh really?”

“And Elm can’t cook.”

“You do know there is a cafeteria, right?”

“All they serve is soup.” Clover tried to stifle a laugh, but evidently he failed, because Marrow spluttered on the other end of the line. “Stop laughing! You know I hate soup!”

“You’re breaking up, the signal must not be very strong here,” Clover said. “Gotta go!”

“Wait!” He paused with his finger over the ‘drop call’ button. “I just wanted to say, be careful and don’t do anything stupid.”

He hung up and slipped his scroll back into his pocket. He liked Marrow well enough, but he wasn’t sure what the point of the call had been. There was no reason Marrow should be worried about him; he hadn’t told Ironwood exactly why he was extending his mission, and even if he had, Ironwood wouldn’t have told Marrow.

Was Marrow actually going to miss him?

He frowned and looked back up at the bird, as if it would answer his question. It tilted its head to look at him with one eye, but it didn’t provide any enlightenment.

“Kids,” he said with a shake of his head. “I don’t suppose you know anything about that?”

It turned its head and looked at him with its other eye.

“Right? I just don’t get them sometimes. Though I suppose Marrow isn’t technically a kid anymore.” He sighed and scrubbed a hand over his face. “Maybe I’m just old.”

It cawed once.

“No, you’re right. I’m not that old.”

It was then he realized he was talking to a bird. He sighed again and turned away from it before anyone caught him, and he started to question his sanity.

Clover was almost halfway through his second cup of coffee before the kids showed up- or, rather, Ruby, Jaune, and a rumpled Qrow showed up. Ruby cradled a massive cup of coffee in her hands, while Jaune made quick work of a muffin as they walked towards him. Qrow held his own cup of coffee, more reasonably sized than Ruby’s. He had been staring at Clover with piercing red eyes, but as soon as he looked towards him, he scowled and glared down at his coffee. He couldn’t quite decipher the look Qrow had been giving him, but the man was hard enough to read as it was.

They sat down across from him, and Ruby pulled out a stack of papers, covered in at least seven different styles of handwriting and badly drawn stick figures. She spread the stack out across the table and looked at Clover expectantly, practically bouncing in her seat. Jaune finished the rest of his muffin in one gulp and leaned over the table to point to one of the papers.

“This is our best one, in my opinion,” he said. The paper showed a stick figure running from another one- Callows, he assumed, if the curly tail coming out of its butt and the disturbing expression on its face was anything to go by- and some sort of shape that vaguely resembled a pot of soup. Out of the corner of his eye, he caught Qrow hiding a smirk behind his coffee cup.

“Walk me through it,” Clover said, because he didn’t think the plan was to give Callows a pot of soup.

“So, he hates me right?” Ruby started. “We spread a rumor that I’ve been spotted near here. When he shows up I lead him right into a trap! I can use my super speed to get away and he falls into a hole we dig! Then we can knock him out.”

That made more sense.

“It’s not a bad start,” Clover said. “But doesn’t he know you’re traveling in a group? There’s no guarantee you can get him to run over the trap, or that he won’t spot it. There’s also the risk he’ll be able to sneak up on you.”
“Just leave me out of it and they’ll be fine,” Qrow muttered. Ruby delivered a swift kick to the leg of his chair, nearly spilling his coffee all over his lap. Clover didn’t think he was supposed to hear that, but even Ruby seemed to deflate a little over his comment.

“What do you mean?” he asked, raising an eyebrow.

“My semblance.” Qrow frowned at the table. “It brings bad luck.”

Clover had never met anyone else with a semblance like his— even if Qrow’s was, in a sense, the opposite of his. Vine had spent hours puzzling over the logic of a luck semblance, insisting that no, there was no way that was his semblance, until Clover beat him in twenty consecutive rounds of cards. This was a situation he should take advantage of, try and figure out just how that worked, if only to try and understand his own semblance better.

Clover’s stupid brain, unfortunately, was miles ahead of him.

“Well, my semblance just happens to be good luck.” He smiled like an idiot and winked. “Lucky you, huh?”

He caught up with his brain and looked away from Qrow before the man saw the panic in his eyes. Ruby and Jaune stared at him with wide eyes, and Qrow hadn’t said a word, but he couldn’t force himself to turn and look at him.

“So. The plan,” he prompted.

“Right,” Jaune said.

Clover was going to die.

Chapter End Notes

I wrote half of this while watching the Superbowl and the other half in bed sick, so I really hope it turns out alright. I’m gonna be busy for the next few days so I got this chapter out a little early for y’all.
Realizations

Chapter Summary

Qrow is a bird brain

Chapter Notes

This one is shorter than the others, partially bc I wasn't sure what to do with it and partially because school has been hectic recently. Don't worry, the others will be longer! But I also didn't want to keep yall waiting too long.

Qrow wasn’t quite sure what had happened, but Ruby and Jaune finally seemed satisfied with the plan. Clover had managed to render him speechless for the whole meeting with a single line, and he couldn’t let that stand. As Ruby and Jaune gathered up their notes, chattering away and making for the door, Qrow glanced down at Clover finishing his coffee.

“Kids. I don’t suppose you know anything about that?”

Qrow waited just long enough to watch Clover choke on his coffee before turning and following the kids out the door, probably more satisfied than he should be, but it had been so worth it to see the look on Mr. Perfect’s face. So maybe he had replayed the event of last night over and over in his mind, until he had memorized the entire conversation- as much of one as it could be when Qrow was in bird form. It had everything to do for combing the conversation, from the time Clover had answered his scroll to when he had seemed to realize he was talking to a bird, and nothing to do with how he had looked, his expression more open and carefree than it had been around human-Qrow.

“What was that about?” Jaune asked as Qrow caught up to them.

“Nothing, just saying goodbye,” Qrow answered vaguely.

“After the man straight up flirted with you like that?”

“There was nothing straight about that,” Ruby snickered.

Qrow groaned. Of course they had picked up on that, and once they reached their lodgings, the whole group would know before he had a chance to get a word in edgewise. It wasn’t like he had even flirted back- Clover hadn’t given him a chance, and if he had, Qrow certainly wouldn’t have taken it. He still didn’t trust him, and it would take more than a wink and a strange coincidence to change that.

They would get Tyrian off their tail, no pun intended, and then they would ditch Clover before he figured out that they had stolen Atlas military property. They’d been careful to hide their faces during the heist, but with their luck, there were already warrants out for their arrest. The last thing they needed to add onto their growing list of crimes was resisting arrest and assaulting a Huntsman.
Qrow still thought they should count their losses and disappear to Vacuo. It didn’t seem like they’d ever get a chance to get to Ironwood, and they most certainly couldn’t talk to him from jail. But nobody ever listened to Qrow, it seemed.

He’d just have to find some proof.

Bird form wouldn’t quite cut it. He’d have to get close to the man, pretend like he trusted him, and as soon as he found the evidence, he could show it to the kids. Maybe Clover would even flirt with him a little more- not that he wanted that, right? He was just cute, and had a nice smile, and treated the kids with respect, and had a semblance that happened to balance out Qrow’s and-

Fuck.
Clover scrolled through his contacts, but almost every single one of them were work contacts, which meant he couldn’t call them and ask them to spread a rumor- he was pretty sure that broke protocol in at least seven different ways. Then that would lead to more questions, like, why hasn’t he arrested them yet, or at least called for back-up, actual serial killer be damned. Marrow might help, but he was terrible at keeping secrets, and the whole Ace Ops team would know about it by the end of the day, and then the General, and Ironwood would feel a lot more generous if he had an escaped serial killer to offer.

A knock at his door startled him out of his thoughts. He stood, stepping over his bag- still packed, in case of an emergency- and opened the door to find Qrow on the doorstep. His mind blanked for a second, then two, then three as he stared at the other man. What was he doing here? Had something happened? Or was he here to chew Clover out for flirting with him? Or had he figured out Clover’s real orders?

Qrow interrupted his train of thought by clearing his throat and asking, “Uh, so can I come in?”

“Oh,” Clover said, scrambling to hide his sudden panic. “You just startled me.”

“Thanks. It’s kinda cold out there.” Qrow chuckled and stepped past Clover into the lodging. His eyes darted around the space, and with mounting horror, Clover realized he hadn’t made his bed this morning. It wasn’t like any of his teammates could walk in and report him for it, and he hadn’t expected the very cute Huntsman to show up on his doorstep. “Wow, you really keep this place clean, don’t you?”

Was he making a jab at the bed? Sure, the rest of the place was nearly spotless- Clover didn’t use the kitchenette, and he didn’t have much that would create a mess- but the messy bed stood out all the more because of it. Maybe he was just fixating on it and Qrow didn’t actually care.

“Habit,” Clover said with a shrug. “Can I help you with something?”

“Right.” The whole interaction had been incredibly awkward, and he still didn’t know why Qrow had come to his house, or, now that he thought about it, how he knew where he was staying. “I wanted to discuss the plan with you.”

“Oh.” He shouldn’t be so disappointed. This is a job, after all, and they’re both Huntsmen. It was nothing personal, he told himself. “Of course. What part of it?”

“All of it?” Qrow rubbed the back of his neck, blushing slightly. “I kinda missed it. After the soup thing.”

“So, the whole plan?”

“Yeah, pretty much.”
Was that Clover’s fault?

“You do know the kids have the plan, too.”

“Yeah, but they’re being, uh, difficult.”

That was definitely Clover’s fault, if the blush spreading across Qrow’s face was any indication. He winced, tugging at the sleeve of his shirt. It wouldn’t be the first time he had flirted his way into trouble, and it probably wouldn’t be the last.

“Sorry about that.”

“Nah,” Qrow said, waving his hand. “It’s what they do. Don’t worry about it too much.”

“They’re quite the interesting bunch of kids,” Clover said as he pulled out a chair for Qrow. He chose his next words carefully, remembering the face Qrow had made when speaking of his semblance. “They seem to really look up to you.”

“Once upon a time, I would have drank to that,” Qrow chuckled.

“You shouldn’t do that,” Clover said with a frown.

“Don’t worry, I gave that up.”

“No, I mean deflect a compliment.”

For the second time that day, Clover managed to leave Qrow speechless. He managed to mumble out something unintelligible and cleared his throat. “Uh, so, the plan,” he prompted.

“Right,” Clover agreed. He launched into a brief explanation of the plan- he would find a way to spread the rumor that Ruby and her friends had been spotted out in the tundra, they would lie in wait for Callows and ambush him when he showed up.

“It sounds simple enough,” Qrow said. “There’s a lot that could go wrong, though.”

“That’s what I’m worried about,” he admitted. “However, sometimes simple is better.”

“I’ll feel better when that asshole isn’t putting those kids in danger.”

“Do you have any idea why he’s after you?” Clover asked.

“Not really,” Qrow said, dropping his eyes to the table. “He attacked us on Mistral and Ruby shot off his tail. Thought that would be the last of him, but then he showed up again, with a shiny new prosthetic tail.”

That was more than a little suspicious, but Clover didn’t press Qrow on his obvious lie for the moment. He frowned, thinking over the other Huntsman’s words, and the one very worrying piece of information.

“A new tail, huh? That takes skill to make. There are very few people alive who could do that.” And Pietro Polendina sure as hell wouldn’t have done it. “Any idea where he got it?”

“Unfortunately, no. He might have someone looking out for him, but it’s just as likely he threatened somebody for it.”

Clover made a mental note to order someone to look into that when he got back to the city. He didn’t have all the information, but Qrow wasn’t going to tell him, at least not willingly, or at the
present moment. At the moment, he had to focus on figuring out someone to help him spread that rumor- maybe one of those recent Academy graduates- and then he could formulate a plan to figuring out what was going on with Qrow and all these kids.

Chapter End Notes

we're almost to some fun hijinks and I am Excited!! Hope yall enjoy this chapter! :3

I also just realized I kinda accidentally gave Clover anxiety. Oops?
Qrow managed not to break into a run the moment Clover’s door closed behind him. He made sure he was out of sight of the windows before he leaned against a wall, taking in a long, slow breath through his nose before letting it out his mouth. His breath clouded in the air in front of him, but it didn’t give him answers to what had just happened. What was it about this one Huntsman that managed to get under his skin so easily?

He still hadn’t learned anything useful, and, while he had managed to dodge exactly why Tyrian was being a pain in the ass, he didn’t think Clover was going to drop it. It wasn’t exactly easy to explain that they were trying to stop an evil, immortal woman who nobody knew existed from conquering the whole solar system.

He glanced up and down the street, making sure no curious eyes were looking out windows, before he shifted into his crow form, soaring out above the roofs and circling twice before landing on Clover’s windowsill. He peered through the curtains, watching the man frown at his scroll like it was a particularly difficult math problem. He sat there for a moment, enjoying the slight crease of the other man’s forehead, the way he leaned his head on one hand, his fingers tapping idly on the table.

After a moment, Qrow tapped his beak against the window, earning a positively delightful look of surprise from the man. He stood, making his way to the window, and parted the curtain, staring out at Qrow with raised eyebrows. He ruffled his feathers, tapping on the window again, and tilted his head up at Clover.

The Huntsman reached out and unlocked the window, opening it inward so Qrow could hop in and flutter to the table. He closed the window so the cold didn’t seep in and sat back down, watching as Qrow hopped towards his scroll.

“I don’t suppose you’re here to help,” Clover said.

He was an absolute fucking dork.

“Well, Elm says talking out loud helps people think,” he continued. He had mentioned Elm before, something about cooking. She must be a teammate. Qrow stored that away for later, to see if he could look her up- or discreetly ask Weiss about her. “Talking to a bird isn’t as weird as talking to yourself, right?”

Qrow cawed an affirmative.

“I suppose I’m just overthinking, is all. It’s a lot easier to do that off the field. More time to think.” He sighed heavily. “You see, I’m kinda pulling a Robyn.”
Qrow tilted his head, trilling in confusion.

“Robyn? She’s got a good heart, she’s just what you could call, ah, unconventional.” He ran a hand through his hair, messing up his perfectly slicked-back hair, leaving it sticking up in places. It looked much better that way, Qrow thought. “But she’s also not part of the Atlesian military, so it’s not like she’s ever actually disobeying a direct order.”

Oh, that was odd. Qrow tilted his head the other way, hopping closer.

“Oh, don’t you start in on me, too. I’m very aware they could be lying, or working with Callows. But I don’t think so. Though they are hiding something.” Clover sighed again, looking back down at his scroll and flicking through his contacts. Some of them flashed by too fast for Qrow to see, but he caught a few names- Hazard to Society, Wags, Flynt, Don’t Fucking Answer- before he stopped on one. Qrow hopped onto his arm, careful not to tear his sleeve with his claws, and stared down at the name. “Yeah, this could work.”

Pietro Polendina. The name sounded oddly familiar, though Qrow couldn’t place it off the top of his head. He swiveled his head to look up at Clover, cawing once.

“Can you even read?” Clover asked. Qrow bristled, feathers puffing up, and the man laughed. “Okay, sorry. I think it was a fair question. You’re a fucking bird.”

A laugh, almost human, burst from Qrow’s beak. He hadn’t expected the straight-laced Huntsman to ever drop a cuss word like that, but he didn’t exactly know the crow on his arm was, well, Qrow.

Just then, his scroll dinged, signaling a new message. Qrow snatched it in his beak and fluttered over to the bed, dropping it on the blankets and staring down at it. Clover yelped, but it wasn’t like birds could read, according to him. He looked down at the message- from one ‘Speedy McGee’- that read “What the fuck do you mean you’re extending the mission for an unspecified period of time. They’re literally just thieves. Did you need to get away from Vine that fucking bad?”

Clover snatched it away from Qrow, giving him a glare. “Those are expensive, you know. Please don’t do that.” He glanced at the message, his eyebrows raising. Qrow huffed, tilting his head back and forth and flapping his wings a few times. “Believe it or not, that’s actually pretty tame for her.”

Qrow ruffled his feathers and flapped over to the window, tapping on the glass a couple times. Clover sighed, following him over to the window. “I’m really sorry she offended your delicate sensibilities.”

That wasn’t it, but Clover absolutely did not need to know that.

Qrow leaped out the window and soared into the air, where he could think far away from any distractions. If he had interpreted the message right- and psssh, Qrow never jumped to conclusions- then Clover had lied about his actual mission. There was no reason to do that, except if the thieves he was apparently sent after were the thieves he was working with at that very moment. Sure, he was helping them with Tyrian at the moment, but what about after? Would he turn around and arrest them?

With a heavy internal sigh, Qrow angles towards their lodging and wondered how the hell he would explain this to the kids.

Chapter End Notes
nobody:
me: actually, it's time for angst now

in all seriousness, I can't wait until Marrow shows up in person and gets to be a badass. I just really love him okay

End Notes

Sorry if this is a little incoherent, I downed a whole coffee and wrote this in a fit of inspiration. Thanks for reading, and hopefully updates won't be too irregular.

Tbh I headcanon Clover as being a wee bit of a disaster, even if he never shows it.

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