How Could You Be My Enemy
Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/7595488.

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<td>Part 1 of Darkest Shade of Red</td>
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<td>Stats:</td>
<td>Published: 2016-07-27 Completed: 2017-12-10 Chapters: 47/47 Words: 194513</td>
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How Could You Be My Enemy
by Angry_Face

Summary

She looked at the Atlesian woman, no longer was she Weiss Schnee, the hot-tempered heiress who studied and loved to play with Zwei, she was Specialist Schnee now. Just as she was no longer Ruby Rose, the loveable, hyperactive girl who loved cookies and strawberries, she was the Red Death. Gone was that girl, a soldier now stands in her place.

In the height of the Second Great War, lines are drawn as the world is drenched in bloodshed. Ruby and Weiss find themselves on opposite sides of the conflict, Blake is burdened with the guilt of what she had done, and Yang is wasting her days lost in a haze, unsure how to carry on. The lines between friend and foe are blurring and no one is sure who is what anymore, and only in their darkest moments will they truly know who their enemy is.

Notes
Cover art provided by the talented Chakiru on Tumblr. Please go check her out over there, her art is fantastic!
Comrade, I did not want to kill you... But you were only an idea to me before, an abstraction that lived in my mind and called forth its appropriate response... I thought of your hand-grenades, of your bayonet, of your rifle; now I see your wife and your face and our fellowship. Forgive me, comrade. We always see it too late. Why do they never tell us about that your are poor devils like us, that your mothers are just as anxious as ours, that we have the same fear of death, and the same dying and the same agony-forgive me, comrade; how could you be my enemy.

-Paul Baumer after killing a french soldier.

The Blood-Soaked Rose

Pt: I

Nothing ever ends poetically.

It ends

and we turn it into poetry.

All that blood

was never once beautiful.

It was just

red.

-Kait Rokowski

An endless black surrounded her as the floor shook and vibrated under her thick boots. She could hear nothing but the deafening whine of Dust powered engines as the aircraft continued on its way towards its destination. How many times has she done this? six, seven times already? Time blurred in the head of Ruby Rose, she did not know for how long this battle had been going on for, or when it actually started. Her thoughts were taken from her when a loud buzzer broke the haze of her idle mind, and a light bathed her in crimson.

In front of her, the rear ramp began to lower and a hot wind whipped her faded red cloak back and forced her dark, crimson tipped hair out of her silver eyes. Below her, the Second Great War was in full swing in the ruins of one of the larger cities in Vacuo. A city called Ritrr. Behind Ruby, a full platoon of Valenese Reclamation Army soldiers were doing last minute checks over their gear.
before they dropped onto the hot sands to help defend a home that was not theirs.

The city of Vale had been lost ever since the Fall; Grimm owned that city and no one could get within ten kilometres without coming under attack from Nevermores or Beowolves. It had been four years since the Fall of Beacon and the kingdom of Vale, displacing thousands of people and drawing in an insurmountable amount of Grimm. The following year, Atlas attacked without warning, adding to the total number of deaths since the fall, and marking the start of the Second Great War.

Taking a few steps out onto the ramp, the wind was whipping her red cloak out behind her, and the hot Vacuoan air drained the moisture from her lips. She could see the flashes of rifle fire and explosions as buildings collapsed under Paladin fire. She was glad she had decided to change into lighter clothing; a white blouse with her black and red corset, torn black stockings under her battle skirt, and her large boots to finish it off.

Taking a deep breath, she held it as she listened to the orders that were shouted over the wind to the soldiers behind her. Push back the Atlesians, protect the Vacuo Resistance and ensure that civilian casualties were low. She heard a second buzzer and the order to jump was given. A steady stream of bodies ran past her and leapt off the ramp, pulling their parachutes and floating to the ground. She took a step off the ramp of the dropship and plummeted towards the war below her head first. Ironically, as the wind whipped past her body forcing her tattered cloak to trail behind her like a failed parachute, she found a few moments of peace to reflect and think. Nothing but her and her thoughts.

She remembered when she heard that Mistral and Vacuo had joined forces to defend against Atlas. How Mistrali forces attacked Atlas, and how Atlas retaliated with an army occupying Vacuo as a show of force. Between the excessive show of force and the Grimm, Vacuo had Fallen just like Vale. She remembered when she heard that with her friends Jaune, Ren, and Nora. She remembered the one night where Jaune had a complete breakdown after they had found Pyrrha's weapons at the top of the CCT tower in Vale. What was supposed to bring closure only brought pain as he lashed out at his friends. When the fight was over, all of them were bloody and broken.

She remembers standing outside the surgery room, holding Nora still as they waited for Ren to pull through, praying to anyone who would listen. She remembered holding Nora back as the once vibrant Ginger began to scream and shout in a fit of rage and tears when they told her that the damage was too extensive and they couldn't save his legs, that he would be confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. She remembered the long nights of staying in Ren's hospital room, watching him sleeping, hoping he would wake up; if only for Nora's sake.

Opening her eyes, she saw the ground coming up on her quickly. Flipping over so her feet were below her, she pulled out Crescent Rose, her hand build sniper-scythe, and opened it in its full scythe form. Firing into the air, she sailed to the ground in a controlled spiral, leaving a flurry of rose petals in her wake. Seeing her nearest target, she slammed into the Atlesian soldier feet first and knocked him to the ground. She felt his ribs bend and shatter under the impact, his armour doing nothing to defend against her. She knew he was dead, or at least would be dead in a few horrible seconds. Her silver eyes darted around, seeing the rest of his unit react to her sudden intrusion, aiming their rifles and handguns at her. They were too slow.

They were always too slow.

Swinging her scythe around, she released the hinge and the blade angled up into the war spear configuration as it reached the knee of the first soldier. Firing a round, the momentum carried the sharp blade through both of his knees, coming to the waist of the next unfortunate soul in its path.
Cleaving through him with ease, the unhinged scythe continued on through the chest of the third soldier who, judging by the scream, was a woman. Finishing off by decapitating the last man of the five-man team,

a sound caught her attention. The sound of a painful, soft cry of someone near her. Her eyes looked down at the man with no legs; now blood stained the sands around them as he cried out in pain, reaching out to grip his legs, desperately trying to stop himself from bleeding out, prolonging his life for as long as he could. Reaching behind her, Ruby offered to help him in the only way she knew how now. His cries stilled and his body relaxed as Ruby pulled out a handgun and put a round through his head.

How strange was it that she could take another's life just as easily as she could kill a Grimm with the skills and mastery that honed her body to hunt down the bane of human existence. With ease, she turned those skills to kill what she was so devoted to protecting. Looking around the area, she saw more Atlesian soldiers with robotic Knights making up the bulk of the force as well as Paladins mechs for heavy support. Hidden behind walls and burnt out buildings, she saw others in red and black camouflage, the colours of the Valenese Reclamation army.

Ruby remembered when she first heard of them, and how excited she was about joining up to actually do some good instead of just doing nothing. Their original goal was to reclaim Vale from the Grimm and reestablish the CCT. Shortly after enlisting, she found out that it was only a pipe dream. She remembered the first time she went out with a group to scout out any way into Vale, only to come under attack by Atlesian soldiers halfway there. She remembered the panicked chaos that followed a second after the lead transport exploded suddenly.

She remembered rolling into a tree as she jumped off the transport as it took a hit, falling to the ground and covered in dirt and leaves. She remembered the sounds of people screaming as Atlas soldiers came out of nowhere and began to open fire on them with assault weapons and dust activated blades. She remembered the one soldier that walked up to her, pistol in hand, and placed it against her head. She remembered the choice she had to make, to kill him or let herself be killed. She remembered when she stopped being a Huntress.

She remembered when she became a soldier.

Leaping through the air, using her sniper rounds to push her further than her semblance would normally; she defended her allies and comrades in battle against their common enemy. Swinging her weapon as bullets bounced off her aura, she was again reminded that body armour would have just slowed her down. Her Aura was more than enough to stop any bullet from piercing her skin so long as she kept it up, but they still stung when she was hit.

Jumping from soldier to soldier, she killed man just as efficiently as machine, soldiers and Knights falling under the weight of her blade. Dashing from side to side, Crescent Rose dripped with blood as Ruby ran from skirmish to skirmish, person to person, becoming just another cog in this machine of war. Rounding a corner, she was face to face with an Atlesian Paladin, she heard its weapons rev up and only had a second to sprint as fast as she could through several buildings to avoid the chain guns mounted onto the advanced war machine.

Even with her Aura, if she took too many shots it would fail and she could be seriously hurt. She had found that out the hard way. It was just after her third battle that she realised how easy it was to take a life; a slash here, a shot there, being at the wrong place at the wrong time and there would be no more pain. She did her best to kill people as quickly as she could, lest they suffer from their injuries. Seeing all the hurt and injured at the medical camps while she was being treated, she couldn't help but wish that no one would go through this, not even her enemy, so she would make
sure they would not suffer.

With her previous experience in fighting these machines, Ruby knew where their blind spot was. Jumping through a window, she sprinted through shattered buildings and around bits of cover as she advanced towards it. Her trail of rose petals was torn apart by auto-fire as she slipped between the Paladin's legs and placed the blade against the thin joint that connected the leg to the rest of the body. Slicing clean through it, she got out of the way before it toppled over onto its side.

Leaping on top of it, she sliced off its arm so it couldn't shoot her while she stood on top of it. Without looking, she drove the scythe into the cockpit of the Paladin, killing the pilot before he could eject. It was all muscle memory to her now; without looking, she could disable and eliminate the Atlas Paladin walkers with ease. Pulling the crimson painted blade clear of the twisted metal, she jumped off and was about to sprint off in another direction; her legs tensed and she felt her Aura shimmer around her body, bracing her for the impact of going near the speed of sound.

"Ruby?"

She stopped. Her blood went cold. Her breath caught in her breast. No one called her Ruby, not here anyway. Yang used to call her Ruby, but that was before she left three years ago. Last time she had seen Yang was at her father's funeral in Patch. Blake called her Ruby, but she hadn't seen the cat faunus since the Fall. Ren called her Ruby, but he was back at VRA HQ, one of the last cities in Vale that people still lived in relative safety. Jaune used to call her Ruby, but that was before he blamed her for Pyrrha's death and stabbed Ren in the stomach during their fight. Nora used to call her Ruby, but now she doesn't really speak much at all. The woman went silent after Ren was forced into a wheelchair and she took her frustrations out on anyone who was unfortunate enough to be in the way when she swung her hammer or fired off grenade rounds. The members of SSSN and CFVY used to call her Ruby, but she hadn't seen any of them for a very long time. The soldiers she fought with never called her Ruby, it was either Sergeant Major Rose Or Ma'am. That only left...

"Weiss?"

Silver eyes looked back towards the Atlesian front. Several meters away, she could see her snow white hair, tied to the side as she always had done. Her beautiful pale skin was tinted copper and shone in the hot Vacuoan sun. Her bright blue eyes were sparkling as they met silver. Under an Atlesian breastplate, she wore a deep blue shirt and skirt that matched her eyes and fit her form perfectly. Silver eyes trailed down her body, tracing her bare legs down to the fashionable, yet practical boots that were around her feet. It was only after seeing that, did Ruby see the glint of Myrtenaster, her Multi-action Dust rapier, in her hand, its tip painted red with blood.

Forcing her body to breathe, she opened her mouth to say something, anything! Nothing came forth, her brain was stuck in fight mode. There's no need for talking when you're fighting, only bloodshed. Weiss moved her hand. Ruby flinched and tightened her grip on her scythe. Weiss brought her hand up to her ear, never moving her sapphire eyes away from the red-cloaked woman. Ruby noticed from the side of her vision that the tip of Crescent Rose's blade dripped lightly onto the stained sands.

"This is Specialist Schnee," Weiss began, "The Red Death has been spotted in the Engagement Zone..." That was another name Ruby had picked up, The Red Death. It was given to her mostly by the enemy, they would scream it out when someone spotted her trail of rose petals or a red blur flew through the front lines. It was the last name on most people’s lips when her scythe sliced through Atlesian soldiers. She had hated it at first; but just like how she learned to take lives with ease, she had learned to wear that name like her cloak. No matter where she goes, she will always
be the Red Death to them. "Specialist Schnee, now engaging." Weiss had put her hand down and stared at Ruby.

Slowly, Ruby shook her head. Feelings long dead began to stir within her. "Don't do this," Ruby asked gently. It wouldn't be the first time she had fought other Huntsmen and Huntresses on the battlefield, they were easy to spot since their weapons and clothing never matched those around them. But this was Weiss! Weiss Schnee! Her friend. Her partner. Her teammate! How could she even think of fighting her? Sure she had fought her before back at school, but those were spars or arguments that never spilt over into violence.

"Weiss! Please, take your men and leave!" Ruby called out. She had begged people before to leave the battlefield when a fight broke out; but they always laughed and fired on her, so eventually she had just stopped asking. She watched Weiss close her eyes for a moment, taking a deep breath, and open them again. Any hesitation was gone from her blue eyes. She lifted her chin, her shoulders moved back, her right foot came forward, and then slid back just a bit. She pointed the tip of her rapier at Ruby and narrowed her eyes.

Shaking her head again, Ruby closed her eyes. She didn't see Ruby Rose anymore, all she saw was the enemy. Taking a deep breath, Ruby opened her silver eyes to reveal steel. Shifting her weight to her back foot, she slid her right foot forward through the sand. She gripped her scythe tightly as her finger traced the trigger, getting ready to begin her attack against her former partner.

Taking another breath, she looked at the Atlesian woman; she was no longer Weiss Schnee, the hot-tempered heiress who studied and loved to play with Zwei, she was Specialist Schnee now. Just as she was no longer Ruby Rose, the loveable, hyperactive girl who loved cookies and strawberries, she was the Red Death. Gone was that girl, a soldier now stood in her place. The battle continued to rage around them as a Paladin fired its rockets and collapsed a husk of a skyscraper behind her. As it fell, Ruby took deep breaths, calmed her nerves and narrowed her eyes. When the building hit the ground, she sprinted forward in a flurry of petals.

In the blink of an eye, Ruby was at Weiss' position, scythe coming down at her. She had anticipated the attack and lifted her right hand to block the attack, her hand forming a glyph as it stopped the red tipped blade of Crescent Rose. In the same movement, Weiss moved to thrust at Ruby's stomach, but she had learned that staying in one place for more than a second meant death when dealing with other Huntsmen and Huntresses. Spinning out of the way, she brought the scythe with her and tried for a bottom-to-top slash against her.

Weiss parried it and jumped out of the way long enough to ready another glyph and charged in with another thrust, her blade glowing red with flames licking off the steel. Ruby blocked it with the staff of her weapon and fired up, jumping over Weiss as she went for a downwards strike, only to find that Weiss wasn't there. She used another glyph to move out of the way. Another series of fast slashes and slices sent Weiss backtracking, doing her best to deflect the heavy scythe before finding an opening to thrust, tearing another hole in Ruby's tattered cloak.

With a sudden shift in momentum, Ruby brought the back of her scythe down hard, connecting it to the back of Weiss's head, causing the white-haired woman to cry out in pain as her Aura took the brunt of the attack. Steadying herself, she lifted her weapon and charged at Ruby, her thrusts and slashes coming in too fast to properly counter, forcing her on the defensive. Thrust, thrust, slash, thrust, slash. Her weapon elegantly flew through the air, with Ruby barely deflecting the thin blade enough to simply cause light cuts on her skin; her Aura already healing whatever surface cuts she accumulated.

A light trail of blood ran down her cheek as she swung her weapon and spun it around her. Building
momentum, she wielded the scythe with grace as she flawlessly chained slices with blocks from the spinning tool of death. Her blade caught Weiss across her arm and she jumped back and held her bicep, blood seeping between her fingers as the blue fabric hung in place. Gritting her teeth, she took a deep breath and swung her weapon in a complex pattern as a glyph formed behind her. Ruby looked up and watched as it began to grow in size until it was three times as tall as she was.

Watching as a massive armoured hand gripped the edge of the glyph, a massive, blue, glowing suit of armour pulled itself into their reality, brandishing a massive blade in its hand. Spinning her weapon, Ruby stuck the blade into the ground and released the near-empty magazine, letting it fall to the ground with a heavy thud. Grabbing her gravity rounds, she slotted the magazine and loaded a shell into the breach with a satisfying click. When the Armour was finished materialising, Ruby went on the attack.

Launching into another strike, she hit the Giant hard with her scythe, only for it to block with its massive blade; giving enough time for Weiss to jump up on more Glyphs she made and try to thrust up into her from below. Spinning into a block, the Giant turned suddenly and attacked her with the combined momentum from a spin and the heavy weight of its weapon, sending Ruby flying into the air and away from the guardian and the summoner.

Recovering in the air, she stood on the blade of her scythe and fired several rounds to slow her down enough before she hit the ground with too much momentum. Rolling to her feet, she loaded another round, drew a bead, and tensed up. The Giant was going to be a problem, but all she needed to do was kill the enemy and it was gone. A tiny voice in the back of her mind reminded her that her name was Weiss, but Ruby quickly shoved it down into the darkest pit of her mind as she got ready to attack again; to kill the enemy Huntress. Charging full speed towards her, she watched as the blade of the Giant came down at her in a slice.

Doing a quick dodge, she ran up the side of the blade and jumped into the air over its arm; firing a shot to send her spinning, the scythe cut clean through the Giant's arm and Ruby landed in front of the enemy. Surprised, she tried to block the quick flurry of attacks, but each second, Ruby's speed only increased. Firing shot after shot to speed her up even more, she fired one more shot and jumped over the Atlesian Specialist, her scythe slipping past her guard and hooking under her arm; another shot, and it tore through her chest.

Landing on her feet behind her, Ruby froze. The tiny voice was now screaming in her brain. Weiss. Her name was Weiss. Her name was Weiss.

She knew that feeling, the familiar sensation of her blade slipping through flesh, cutting bone in half as the sharp edge and the weight of her weapon did all the work for her. The world stopped. She couldn't breathe. She refused to breathe; if she breathed, the world would resume, and she would hear the wet thump of a body hitting the ground. Her lungs burning, screaming for air, she willed her body to obey; but it betrayed her. Gasping for air, she released a sob as hot tears attacked her eyes and spilt over her cheeks. The realisation of what had just happened hit her gut like a cannonball.

Slowly, she turned to face her friend, her partner. Maybe it was a dream, a nightmare. Anything but the truth! She begged within herself, to any god or devil that would listen to just have Weiss Schnee still standing there when she turned around. Inch by inch, she turned to face her fate. Her brain betrayed her next. Instead of Weiss standing there, she saw Blake.

The woman wore a long white coat and a small black top. Blinking three times to make sure she was actually seeing what was in front of her, she watched as the image of Blake slipped in two,
where Ruby had sliced Weiss in half just moments ago. Before the two halves separated, Blake's form shimmered and disappeared in black smoke. When the shadow left her vision, she saw the real Blake, holding Weiss by her shoulders. Weiss's hand was holding her side where Ruby had cut her. The three women stared at each other, still wondering if this was real. Slowly, Blake corrected Weiss so that she was standing on her own two feet.

Weiss looked just as confused as Ruby felt seeing Blake here. Making sure she was alright, Blake looked to Weiss and commanded, "Pull your forces back, Nora's on her way now..." Ruby could already hear the explosions from Nora's grenade launcher, but how did Blake know that Nora was here as well? Weiss looked in the direction of where the explosions were coming from and slowly nodded. Looking back at Ruby, she placed a hand on her ear and spoke.

"This is Specialist Schnee, all Atlesian forces are to pull back, we've been here for too long." She removed her hand and continued to stare at Ruby for a long while until an explosion destroyed a hollowed out building nearby, sending debris everywhere. Everyone flinched and took cover, but not before a chunk hit Ruby in the head, knocking her to the ground. She could feel blood seeping down her forehead, and her Aura sealing the wound.

Slowly getting up to her knees, she looked back to the building burning with pink flames. Looking back to Weiss, her former partner was already running away with the rest of her forces; and Blake was nowhere to be found. Getting to her feet, she held her pounding head. A few more shots zoomed past her as her brain tried to make sense of it all through the muggy haze. She pulled her right hand back from her forehead, wet with blood from her wound. Tears fell from her eyes and washed away the crimson paint that covered her hand as Weiss disappeared from sight.

"How..." Ruby croaked out, "How could YOU be my enemy."

Chapter End Notes

Who is a terrible human being? I'll give you three guesses....

It's me.

I know I should be working on Visions of Today, but I just couldn't get this idea out of my head. I just had to write it down, and I kept writing and writing and it continued into this! I'm planning on this being a one shot, but if people are really interested in it, it may become more. I have a faint idea on where it'll go if people want me to continue this, if not, I hope you enjoyed my little slice of insanity!

If you enjoyed it, leave a kudo so I know I'm doing a good job. leave a comment, I'll accept any and all feedback, and as always, thank you for taking time out of your day to read my stories.
It was a dark morning in the small, dusty town of Breill; being so close to the Grimm Aggression Zone around Vale meant that people avoided the place. The creatures of Grimm only chased people for so long until they turned back and filed back into the city; creating an invisible wall that was formed when Vale and Beacon were overrun. The people here took in anyone they could, but when the Grimm began to come out of the forest to the north, many people fled. The town was reclaimed by a pocket of people, just enough to keep the Grimm away, but anyone who ventured too far into the forest typically never showed up again.

A kind of peace settled on the small town, barely getting any visitors; just a few Huntsmen and Huntresses here and there, whenever they wanted to do their actual job and not just be soldiers for their respective armies. In the small town, the local tavern had a few people all quietly talking or playing cards with brunch. Wisps of smoke were crawling to the ceiling from lit cigarettes. The soft clinks of glasses broke the steady sound of a broken speaker as it played the hits from nearly a decade ago. It was a usual morning for the small community until she walked in.

A young woman with a long white coat walked in. Her raven hair was topped with a black bow as the patrons watched her amber eyes quickly scan the room. As she made her way to the bar, the black ribbon of her weapon swayed as she walked. All conversations stopped as everyone turned to watch her as she walked in her thigh-high boots and leaned against the bar, palms pressing against the bar top as she eyed down the bartender. Walking up to her spot, a young man stood behind the counter with a raised eyebrow.
"What can I get you?' he asked politely. Two small black bumps poked out of the short brown hair atop of his head, marking him as a faunus of some sort. He had a long face and mostly clean clothing as he waited for the woman to say her order.

"Whisky," she answered.

The man simply raised his eyebrows and leaned in slightly, "It's not even lunch yet..."

"And a cheese sandwich," she deadpanned.

He nodded and reached behind the counter and grabbed a smaller glass and poured a small amount of dark liquid into it. She simply grabbed the glass and downed it in one go before slamming it down. She eyed him and he quickly poured another for her.

"Anything else?" he asked as he raised his eyebrow, pouring a third after she downed it again.

She eyed him and held the glass in her hand, staring into the alcohol. She thought about it for a few moments before speaking. "Any and all information on the White Fang hideout located in this town would be good..."

She stared into the man's eyes. His jaw clenched nervously as his apple bobbed in this throat a few times, his complexion paled and began to sweat as she sipped the glass. Everything grew silent around her, the song had changed and now the previous curious glances towards her had become threatening stares.

"Oh," she had an afterthought, "and any information on the whereabouts of Adam Taurus as well."

She heard chairs sliding across the wooden floor. People were getting up and starting to walk towards her, improvised weapons in hands. A shattering of a beer bottle on a table made a sharp edge for cutting. She heard the sound of wood splintering as a few of them turned a broken chair into makeshift batons. She quickly counted seven individuals closing in around her, more probably in the back and upstairs. Her eyes landed on the young man in front of her as he leaned forward slightly, doing his best to look intimidating, but the drop of sweat from his forehead gave away how afraid he was of her.

For good reason.

"Listen, we know who you are, Blake," he said slowly, a slight shake in his voice, "Adam has given us very clear instructions not to kill you...But you're making it much harder to do that the more safe houses you destroy..." His hands began to slide off the bar and down under the counter. "After last week, we're up to six places you've fucked up now..." he said; her ears picked up the sound of metal being shifted at his hands, probably a shotgun. A small smile slipped to her lips as she brought the glass up to her mouth and stared at him.

"You're wrong," she said as she took another sip. His eyes widened slightly as the people closed in around her. "It's seven now."

With a jerk of her left hand, the whisky spilt out of her glass and into the man's face; causing him to cry out as it got in his eyes and to fall to the ground behind the bar. Swinging her arm around, she smashed the glass into the head of the man to her right, knocking him to the ground. Ducking under a baton, she brought her right hand up gripping Gambol Shroud and brought it off her back, cleaving an arm off. She left an older man screaming in pain as blood spattered across the room and he spiralled to the ground. Seeing the fangs in his mouth, Blake figured he was some kind of dog or wolf faunus.
She brought her leg up and kicked the broken bottle out of the hand of the next attacker. She slashed across his chest, spilling more blood as the brawl continued. Separating her weapon, she pulled the katana out with her right and slid the cleaver into her left, blocking and countering the pitiful attacks from the rest. Broken chair legs were ducked under before she landed a thrust through someone’s chest. A switchblade was redirected into another's thigh before a slash across his throat brought the total down to two still standing. With ease, her weapon collapsed in on itself and she threw it so the ribbon wrapped around the face of one of them and buried itself into the other's back. She pulled the trigger with a jerk of her arm, opening his chest cavity; bringing his insides out with the momentum of the gunshot while the tension exerted on the ribbon snapped the other's neck.

Bringing Gambol Shroud back to her hand, she aimed at the stairs just in time for three people to come storming down only to be cut down by gunfire. The last one down fell with blood blossoming from his chest; falling down the stairs, tripping the other two. A single headshot killed the second, and a sick crunch sounded as the last of them fell upon his neck when reaching the ground floor. Blake didn't waste the bullet, since he didn't move after his fall.

Her attention was stolen by a shell being jammed into place and the bartender jumping up to fill her full of lead. The shot never left the gun; as her weapon wrapped around his neck and Blake yanked hard, sending the bartender over the bar and through a table. Walking up to him, she forced him to his knees after kicking the basic weapon out of his reach. Shoving the muzzle of her pistol into his mouth, she gritted her teeth as she whispered dangerously to him, ”Where are they?”

The young man began to cry; tears ran down his cheeks and snot coated his upper lip. Shaking, he flinched when she asked again. Roughly grabbing him and glaring into his eyes, she asked a third time before he capitulated.

He nodded and pointed to a room next to the bar. Blake looked over at it and took a deep breath; with a jerk of her hand, the blade of her weapon sprung out and separated the man's head from his jaw, letting his body fall limply to the ground. Cleaning her blade on the man's shirt, she also wiped the blood off her white jacket (It came off with ease thanks to the Dust lining in the fabric). Walking to the door, she opened it and saw an opening that led into a cellar. Walking down a short stairway, Blake Belladonna found herself in a tunnelled out cave system that ran under the whole town and was lit by Dust lamps.

Silently walking down the stone tunnel, she managed to find a storage room filled with munitions designed for the White Fang Extremists. Walking inside and closing the door, she began to open crates and load up as many bullets she could carry while still being light on her feet. Sitting on a crate, she took a few empty clips from her pockets and loaded up on Dust-Infused bullets; nothing like what Weiss had given to her before the Fall, but they would do.

Pausing for a few moments to reflect upon the ice queen brought forth memories of her friends, her first real friends. Of Ruby Rose, the young girl whose innocence of the world made her adorable as she tried to fill the shoes of a leader while still being a child. The same girl who would scarf down cookies at an impossible rate and be so full of energy that Blake would simply sigh and roll her eyes; but she never failed to bring a smile to the cat-girl’s lips. How she did her best to help everyone around her; always finding the best in anyone and doing nothing but everything she could to protect those around her.

Of Weiss Schnee; Blake had to admit the first time she met Weiss, she had nothing but anger towards the heiress. As that year progressed, she learned to like the girl, even if she was high strung and a total bitch at sometimes. The few times she would let people through the wall of ice she had around her heart, Blake saw a child who needed someone to love and to hold her. Of Yang-
Blake's hand flinched and a few bullets dropped to the ground, tears lining her eyes suddenly and threatening to spill out. Balling her hand into a fist, she felt her nails digging into her palm as she let out a quiet sob. She leaned against the crate and took deep breaths as the night of the Fall crossed her mind, the sight of Yang flying through the air. The look of pure hatred for Adam in her eyes, even in the burning flames of the building and the smoke that filled her vision, Yang Xiao Long was radiant.

Then Adam stole her arm from her. His promise at the time fresh in her mind, words that were repeated in her brain every day and night for the last four years; as she hunted Adam Taurus from one White Fang hideout to the next, destroying and killing anyone and anything in her way to the man. He promised to take away everything she loved, starting with Yang.

She made a promise to tear down everything he ever built with her bare hands, and this was the seventh White Fang safe house in four years she would burn. Clearing her mind, she wiped her eyes and began to reload the clips with renewed motivation, mumbling to herself as she did so. "No more tears," she mumbled out, "No more tears until he's dead. Adam dies, and you can go back to her, you can go back to Yang and apologize. Then you can cry, cry in her arms." She then paused for a moment and sighed, correcting herself. "Arm..."

Finishing up, she loaded a clip into her weapon, tossed the spares inside the pockets in her jacket, and slipped out the room to begin silently making her way further inside the tunnel complex. After a few minutes of walking, she was beginning to wonder how deep these tunnels went when she heard someone's voice calling out; once he was done speaking, a cheer would echo and the man would resume speaking.

Making her way closer, she came out into a large opening where there was a group of maybe thirty White Fang members wearing white and black garb with Grimm masks covering their faces. In front of them on a stage was a man with red hair and bullhorns running along the sides. He wore a black coat and a sword that he held at his side. Adam had just finished saying something and everyone was in mid-cheer; when they were finished, he continued his speech.

"And with the rest of our brothers and sisters relocating to Mistral, we will bring the last human city before Atlas to its knees!" Another cheer came from the people. "Vale was the first step in our crusade to show the humans that it is them that should fear us! Not the other way around!" He was pacing back and forth on the stage while everyone cheered again.

"After Vale fell, Mistral attacked Atlas; causing them to invade and wipe out Vacuo for us! It was during the Vacuoan Fall that I realized that what we're doing is actually helping them! We're saving them from their self-destructive nature! The humans need to be protected from each other or else the entire world will suffer!" He spread his arms out and allowed the cheers to wash over him.

"Now! Let's get everything ready to move to Mistral; for our new world order, Mistral must Fall!" One last cheer erupted, louder than ever. Adam was examining the crowd until his masked face looked up and he saw her. She was so busy listening to his rant and lost in her own mind she did not see him look straight at her until his voice echoed through the cavern, "Blake?"

Suddenly, all eyes were on her. Quickly snapping out of it, she aimed quickly and fired off a shot at him. One of the grunts jumped in front of the shot while others either grabbed their weapons or ran further down the tunnels. Blake fired off more shots before running towards who was left. Slashing with her weapon, she cut one of them open while blocking with the cleaver as a blade came down towards her. With both her arms occupied, Adam came in for a slash downwards and cutting into one of her shadows. He quickly looked over and saw Blake open the throats of three grunts with a single slash. The two of them stared at each other for a few moments before he gestured to those
who remained. "Go get the ships ready, I'll take care of her."

Following his orders, the room was cleared of people, save for Blake, Adam and five dead and
dying White Fang members that had little effect on either of them. They walked around in a large
circle, giving each other a wide berth while never looking away. Amber locked with the pale white
and red of the Grimm mask he wore; a face so familiar to Blake, she couldn't even remember what
colour his eyes were.

Blake was the first to charge in, dark steel clashed against the red edge of Wilt as they danced
around the room. Sparks flew off their blades as they continued to fight, the black cleaver came
down was blocked by Blush as Adam counted with a thrust and Blake twisted past it to score a hit
against his arm. His Aura stopped any slashing damage from taking place; but he still staggered
backwards, Blake never letting up as Adam combined his weapons together and began to defend
against a torrent of angry strikes against him. Blake spun as she advanced, katana strike followed
by a cleaver slash to be chased by another katana strike; with each attack Adam's blade and
clothing began to glow brighter and brighter. Blake raised her foot and kicked him hard in the
stomach, sending him sliding across the ground, his hand gripping the hilt of his weapon and drew
his body back and twisted slightly, ready for Blake's next assault.

And she was ready for him.

Charging forward, Adam's blade shot out of his sheath and dashed forward to meet Blake halfway,
his blade arching through the raven-haired women as his world turned red and black. A shocked
expression on Blake's face was the last thing he saw before a foot came out and connected to his
face, causing the colour to return to his world and stumbling back. Looking around, he saw one of
Blake's shadows fade away in smoke as the woman continued her attack. Taking deep breaths, he
blocked the best he could and ended up with another foot to his stomach, causing him to double
over and begin to cough. Blake began to walk towards him, her face contorted in hate and anger as
she kicked his weapon out of the way before he could reach it.

"Is this what you've become, Adam?" she spat at him as she looked around the room, "Your hatred
turned a force of peaceful revolution into nothing more than terrorism!" She could hardly contain
her anger as he slowly got to his feet. His semblance attack would have drained most of his aura, it
wouldn't take much to finish him off; but she needed answers. "Why?" she screamed at him, her
fists shaking as she clenched her weapons in her hands.

"Justice," he simply replied.

"Justice? You call this justice!?" she screamed as she gestured wildly, "The world is tearing itself
apart and all you care about is justice? The White Fang were supposed to be a symbol of peace!
and you've stained it with the blood you spilled! Your perverted sense of justice has caused all of
this! How many people have died since you've taken over Adam? All we wanted was to be
equals!"

"What you wanted was impossible," Adam yelled back at her, his one hand holding his stomach, "I
made this world for you! All I ever wanted was you; for you to be happy in a world where we
could be safe!"

"And killing all the humans would accomplish this?"

"My only regret is that I didn't do enough to keep you by my side as we changed this world for the
better, hand in hand." Adam's voice lowered slightly. Blake shook her head slowly as she raised her
weapon up and her blade collapsed in on itself and aimed the pistol at his head.
"My only regret," she began, "was that I loved you once." She took careful aim at his head and pulled the trigger.

Just as she fired, a White Fang Grunt charged at Blake, knocking her to the ground as the shot went wide and hit the wall behind him. Adam quickly collected his blade and went to finish the job when the grunt quickly got up, grabbed Adam and pulled him down the tunnel, saying that they had to leave since the place was going to explode. Getting to her feet, Blake could feel blood seeping from a gash on her head that her Aura was already sealing. She did her best to aim at Adam through her haze and only managed to hit the grunt that saved him as he disappeared down the tunnel. She let out a strained yell and took a few deep breaths as her vision focused and become clearer.

Breaking into a short jog, she was about to follow Adam when a dark red portal appeared at the tunnel's opening and someone new walked out. A figure stepped out wearing a full face Grimm mask with black feathers lining the side of her black hair. She wore a black, low-cut dress with red accents and pieces of armour on her arms and legs. Another row of black feathers ran down a chain on her hip. In her hand, a large circular sheath with several lines of colour could be seen.

Blake stopped and stared at the woman. Judging by her mask, she was someone high up in the White Fang. Blake grit her teeth as she drew her weapons up and got ready for another fight. Her Aura was low, but she was not losing Adam when she was this close to ending it. The woman simply raised her hand and gestured her to stop. "Wait! I don't want to fight you!" she said behind her mask. Blake simply charged towards her. The woman's sheath began to spin and then she quickly drew a red blade and blocked the attack, knocking Blake to the side. Her blade extended and she pointed the tip at Blake. "Stop! You need to help your friends!"

Blake ignored her as she continued to slash and charge towards the woman, who simply stayed on defence and waited for her to tire out and kicked her away. Using her shadow to move through a block, she connected a slash across her stomach and the woman growled, "I don't have time for this!" Blake ran forward one more time, only for her to slash the air and open up another black and red portal. There was no way of avoiding it, so Blake jumped through it to slash at the woman. Only to find herself in broad daylight.

Quickly looking around, she saw that she was on some rooftop and the woman was nowhere to be seen. The sound of gunfire echoed through her faunus ears as she tasted sand and blood on the winds. It just past dawn when just a few minutes ago it was early afternoon; the lush forest was now desert; and the town was switched with a hollowed out city, mirroring Mountain Glenn. This made no sense; how could she be in one place one second, and on the other side of the continent the next. Hearing an explosion, she quickly ran to the edge of the roof and looked down at the people running around the sandy streets of the dead city.

They were wearing the red and black uniforms of the Valenese Reclamation Army. While a division of men was running into cover, Blake spotted a familiar presence casually walking down the street. Her bright orange hair and pink skirt was only half as familiar as the weapon she carried. A large grenade launcher in her hands fired a round through a building, causing a squad of Atlesian soldiers to be consumed by a pink explosion. Nora opened her weapon and began to load up more pink grenade shells without breaking stride. Her usual smile was gone, replaced by a dark, angry look that broke Blake's heart to see. Her attention was drawn by the sound of an all too familiar rifle shot. Quickly running across the roof to the other edge, she witnessed Ruby Rose fighting
The woman's words quickly made sense. "You need to help your friends." Blake watched as Weiss summoned a massive suit of armour from a glyph which then batted Ruby away with ease. Stowing Gamble Shroud onto her back, she quickly jumped off the side of the building and began to run down the side to try and get to them before either one does something that couldn't be fixed. Hitting the ground hard, she sprinted off towards the duel as it began to hit its climax. Coming up on Ruby's blind side, she grabbed Weiss just as Crescent Rose nearly rent through the two of them. Leaving a shadow to take the hit, she pulled Weiss to safety and looked at the two of them. "Pull your forces back, Nora's on her way now..." she told Weiss.

The white-haired woman simply nodded and radioed in a retreat order. Blake looked over at Ruby and saw how much older she had become over the last three years. She was shocked to see the dark circles under her eyes and the small scars on her hands and exposed legs. She was about to say something when the building behind Ruby exploded with Nora's grenade fire. Bits of concrete were flying through the air and she watched as Ruby got knocked to the ground from being hit in the head; Blake released Weiss and dove for cover. When she looked around, she saw Weiss running away towards her side, and Ruby was beginning to get up.

Figuring out her options, Blake ran into a building nearby when Ruby began to look around, she heard her plea to the air as she began to retreat to her side. With a sigh, Blake dashed into the shadows and waited for nightfall.

A red and black portal opened up in the middle of a forest, a woman walked out and sighed heavily as it dissipated behind her. She took a few steps when she heard the squawk of a crow above her. Seeing the bird in question, she reached out an arm and it flew onto her hand. Gently stroking its chest, she spoke quietly to it, "It's done, all we can do now is wait and hope they can pull it together."

The bird flew off behind a tree and a man came out from behind it. "Let's hope so, Raven..."

Qrow, her twin brother, pulled out his flask and took a seat on a log. Raven pulled her mask off and ruffled her hair slightly. "What about the boy?" she asked as she set her mask on a rock and looked at her with red eyes. The shake of his head said it all as he took a long sip from his flask.

"He's started praying to Pyrrha," he said as he pushed some more of his quickly greying hair out of his eyes, "I'm pretty sure that there's going to be a new religion in this world if we completely fuck up our mission." He took another sigh; he looked so tired of it all.

"Then we'd better not fail." Raven and Qrow looked over and watched as a man walked out towards them. He had a black jacket with a green turtleneck tightly hugging his skin. He was leaning heavily on a cane, holding a tin cup with steam coming off the top of it held in his other hand. His grey hair was a bit longer than the last time she saw him and looked even more tired than her twin brother.

"Can they actually do it, Ozpin?" Raven asked. "Those kids have been through hell in this war; and all our plans now rely on them."

"It can only be them, Mr. Arc was the last hope of putting what is left of JNPR back together; and with him no longer viable, we must trust in Ms. Rose."
"She's almost as bad as he is," Qrow said as he stood up and walked towards the man in green.
"You know what they call her? the Red Death! She's not even twenty and she's cleaving her way through the battlefield like a goddamn myth..."

"It has to be her," Ozpin stated as he sighed deeply, "She's the only one who's fast enough to do what needs to be done. Besides, that's why we are getting the rest of RWBY; so that they can pull her back, and together they can save this world."

"Speaking of the team," Qrow started as he took another swig from his flask, "What about Yang?"

'I've sent our 'Acquired Assets' to help her get on her feet," Ozpin said as he sipped his drink from the tin cup slowly.

"Hopefully they get there fast," Qrow said as he looked around, "Last I checked, Cinder was sending people out to track down RWBY and kill them. I was about to check up on her after we're done here." Qrow stood up and looked at Ozpin. "Do you trust them?" he asked.

"We're going to have to," Ozpin said as he looked over at the after dawn light and took another sip, "I have to."

Chapter End Notes

Hey! Terrible human being is back with another update on everyone's favourite angst filled kill fest! YAY!

You've probably noticed that I bumped the rating up to explicit because lets face it, I'm murdering people left and right here in horrible ways and are only going to get worse as time goes on, also there might be a few sexy scenes in the future. MIGHT! Don't get your hopes up, but I'll update the tags should anything happen.

Also, plugging in my other story for shameless self advertisement: Check out Visions of Today, the sequel to Dreams of tomorrow which was my first story I posted here (and in general)

Next chapter is either going to be Weiss Schnee or Yang Xiao Long, let me know who you'd rather see for the next one!

If you enjoyed it, leave a kudo so I know I'm doing a good job. leave a comment, I'll accept any and all feedback, and as always, thank you for taking time out of your day to read my stories.
The Dying Ember Pt: I

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Dying Ember

Pt: I

In order to rise,
From its own ashes.
A Phoenix must first
Burn.

- Octavia E. Butler

The sun was beginning to set and people were filing into the local pub in Patch. Everyone knew each other and greeted with happy calls and laughter as they moved around the room to partake in conversations about what happened today on the farm or mine, whatever is new on the television, or about the war; who volunteered next and who was going to follow.

They spoke in hushed tones about what was lost or over laughter as another round of drinks were bought and shared with friends and family as the food was brought from the kitchen and set on tables to be enjoyed. The meat was hard to come by, the prices had skyrocketed after the Fall; and the small farm with a few cows could not support the demand on Patch, even with most of the people afraid of the Grimm threat leaving after the Fall. For those that remained, everyone was as happy as they could be, laughter and chatter filled the tavern, bringing a little bit of warmth to such a cold world.

Yang Xiao Long hated every second of it.

Sitting at the bar, Yang was hunched over a glass of whiskey and was staring into the amber poison with a blank expression on her face. Three years, three years since the beginning of the war, over four years since the Fall of Beacon. She remembered that winter; it seemed so long ago that she watched her baby sister Ruby walk down the path from their house. The last time she’d seen the young Rose was when she returned for their father's funeral. A fresh wave of frustration cascaded over her body as she reached for her glass and took a long sip. Taiyang Xiao Long had died like most Huntsmen had, defending the fleeing people of Vale from the creatures of Grimm somewhere in the mainland.

When she was told of her father's death, she felt nothing. There was nothing left to feel, she had become completely empty since then, since Beacon. Since Adam Taurus had cut her arm off. Yang gritted her teeth as a phantom pain shot through her stump, she reached over with her good hand and began to squeeze and rub what was left of her arm through the sleeve of her jacket that was tied in a knot, one of the last things her father did for her before he left home for the last time, heading
out to face the same fate as Summer Rose.

She had spent entire nights of swearing at the man who did this to her, just screaming at the moon at night, hoping that if the gods still lived up there, that they'd smite him for what he did to her for trying to save Blake.

A fresh wave of something more than frustration washed over her and she downed the rest of the glass and slammed it down on the bar just in front of her as her mind continued to work. Blake Belladonna, her friend, her partner, the last person she expected to abandon her in her time of need. There wasn’t a day that passed where the black haired woman didn't cross her mind in one way or another, she never wanted to kick the stray black cat that wandered around Patch before, but in her current mood, she probably would have.

She grabbed the glass again and took another large gulp, only to see right through the bottom of the glass. Lowering it, she looked into it to make sure she did not miss the fact that she was somehow empty before looking up at the bartender and raised her hand, waving the glass around haphazardly. "Hey!" she yelled out, the room slowly quieting down and taking notice of her. "What gives?" she asked the bartender, her voice a slur.

The conversations died down as she spoke for the first time that night, upon looking up for the first time in a long while, she had noticed that no one was sitting in the next two bar stools on either side of her, as well as the table directly behind her. The bartender walked up to her with a worried look on his face. He was a nice guy, older with greying hair and week-long stubble to match. She couldn't for remember his name for the life of her right now, or anyone else in the room for that matter.

"Yang, I think you should go home," he said carefully.

Yang just scoffed as she set the glass back down on the bar and pushed it towards him. "And I think you should shut up and refill my glass like a fucking bartender!" Her retort shot though still air as she leaned her head on the bar and waited for a someone to force her to leave by dragging her off, but they knew better than to touch her while she is drunk.

The kindly man stood in front of her and shook his head sadly. "Yang, go home, get some sleep. You look terrible, do you even know where Zwei is?" he asked her. She blinked a few times, trying to get her hazy mind in order to answer this question.

"Guess I should probably go let him out..." She mumbled out with a confused look on her face. The man simply shook his head and sighed heavily.

"He's been here for the last two weeks," he gestured behind the bar. She slowly stood up and leaned on the counter for balance as she glanced to where he gestured and saw the family dog sleeping away in a dog bed. Even he looked sad as he slept soundly in the now quiet tavern. She watched him sleep for a few moments before slumping back into her seat and ran her only hand through her blond mane, now greasy and unkempt. "Yang, I hate to see you like this, we all do..." She didn't see the room of people nod and murmur agreements. "Your father was a great man, he helped us so much! What would he say right now if he was here..."

"Probably nothing, since he's dead." Her void, lilac eyes were staring up at the bartender. "It'd be the first time someone left me and actually came back; a fucking miracle!" She put her index finger in the air and waved it around in a circle, telling the truth for the most part. Raven, her mother, had left her when she was barely old enough to really know who she was. It was only by accident that she found out who her birth mother was; a slip of the tongue from a depressed father that spilled the truth.
Then it was Summer, the adoptive mother that loved her with her whole heart like Yang was her own flesh and blood, never to return home where she promised to braid her hair like last time. Next was Blake, who abandoned her when she needed her the most. She recalled how scared she was when she first woke up in the hospital without an arm, crying and tearing her room apart since she didn't know what else to do. Next, it was Taiyang, her father, that gave her empty promises to be right back home after he helped the people leave the island for the mainland, but never returned. Just like Summer.

Finally, there was her half-sister Ruby, who left her in the winter and returned in the summer when they placed a stone in the cliffside next to Summer's gravestone. While there, the two sisters barely spoke to each other, Yang didn't even remember a conversation between the two of them as Ruby left the same day to go back to the front-lines of what became the Second Great War. Her once bright, silver eyes were now hard, muted steel as the young woman became a being of fear in battle.

Since then, Yang had simply been at home, drinking from her father's liquor cabinet since it stopped the pain and no one told her to stop. Eventually, she had eaten all the food she could have made without an arm; so people began to drop baskets of food for her, trying to help her out. She tried to live a normal life after that, going to the town and trying to get her mood up, but all they saw was an armless little girl; and all she saw was the pity in their words. So she drank herself into a stupor most nights, waking up either in a bed nearby or laying on her father's grave. She just gave up; simple as that.

"Please, Yang. Just go home, get some rest and something to eat. You'll feel better." She was about to give another sarcastic retort when she felt someone place a hand on her shoulder and started to pry her from her seat.

"Come on little lady, time to go home." He was obviously new to the town since he put his hands on her, but she quickly turned around, jumping out of her seat and stomped on his foot, making the man cry out in pain as Yang brought her head down and broke his nose with a hard headbutt. He fell to the ground with blood seeping through his fingers as it stained his black jacket and shirt. His black hat skidded across the floor as broken sunglasses shattered into pieces. She began to look around at everyone, waving her arm around.

"Who'sh next! Eh?" she shouted out over the silence of the hall and the groans of the broken man on the floor, adrenaline pumping through her veins from the small conflict, adding fuel to an alcohol-induced rage. "Come on! Bring it!" she shouted, blurry eyes scanning the crowd of people who were now staring at either her or the man on the ground. "No one wants to fight a one-armed girl? Here! I'll make it easy for you!" She then put her left arm behind her back and gripped the back of her grey cargo pants, keeping her hand there. She continued to look around at the people when a single voice popped up from the main door.

"I'll take a go." Looking over, the crowd parted to reveal a man with grey hair and matching eyes, pale complexion, and a cocky smirk on his lips. He wore a grey shirt with a black leather jacket that was left undone and reinforced with armour plates over his forearms and shoulders, black pants with a grey banner on his hip, and large armoured boots on his feet clicked as he walked into the room. Yang felt her breath hitch in her throat as Mercury Black strolled in like he owned the place; flanked on his sides were Junior's goons with their black outfits and red ties.

The blonde tensed up slightly as she took a step back and stared at him, her drunkenness making her wobble slightly as the man who ruined her life continued to saunter in. "Come on, Yang. Let's take a walk," he said to her, murder in his eyes. She took another step back and took a deep breath, her vision clearing some as she did her best to sober up in the few valuable seconds she had left.
Quickly turning on her heels, she sprinted down the hall towards the bathrooms where an emergency exit was located; as she ran, she heard Mercury's voice order the goons to give chase.

Running into the town, the setting sun gave everything an amber glow as she quickly looked around and saw two goons run up to her. Shoulder checking one to the ground and knocking the other down with a haymaker to the chin, she ran past them into the main part of the town. She knew this place like the back of her hand, so she was confident in losing them in the core. Ducking into an alleyway, she watched as a few goons ran past her hiding spot before she got up and ran down behind a building, crashing into someone else. The henchman grabbed her by the shoulders and was about to yell out to the others when her head connected to his jaw. He quickly pushed her to the ground and rubbed his jaw tenderly.

A foot connected to her stomach and knocked her onto her back where the man mounted her and pinned her one arm above her head. "You fucking cunt!" he yelled at her. He lowered his head to hers as he stared into her eyes, with only one arm and no leverage, all the squirming she did availed to nothing as he hovered above her face. "We got orders to kill you, but no sense in wasting a good ass," he said with a dark laugh as his other hand began to roam her body, cupping her breast through her orange tank top, giving it a squeeze. She growled at him and gritted her teeth as he continued to violate her chest with his hand. He leaned a bit further in and she jerked forward, grabbing his lip with her teeth; she pulled hard enough for him to cry out and released her hand to punch her in the face, igniting her semblance.

Reaching behind her, she found a large rock and brought it up to his head, smashing his glasses and knocking him off of her. Following the momentum, she rolled on top of him and brought the rock down on his head again. Her eyes turned red and hair started to flare as she continued to break his face with the rock in her fist. Lost in her fury, her hand began to become wet with blood and gore as he stopped crying out and simply laid there and took the punishment. His face caved in as bone began to jut out, brain matter began to splatter her face as she brought the rock down, again and again, crying out with each attack. His body was twitching under hers as the life left his mortal container and he finally laid motionless under her.

Her chest heaving as she gasped for air finally, she stared down at the corpse below her, rock still clutched in her bloodstained hand. Reaching up, she smeared more blood on her face as she tried to get wipe bone off her cheek. Clumsily getting to her feet, she let the bloody rock fall to the ground as she began to walk towards the exit of the alleyway, only to find Mercury and other goons were already waiting, each of them looking afraid at what the blonde woman would do to them after witnessing her beating one of their members to death with a simple stone.

Slowly, the grey man began to clap with a smile. "That was impressive," he said with a smile, "But, now you need to die." He snapped his fingers and the men pulled out handguns and aimed at her. Yang just took deep gasps as she faced her would-be killers head on and cleared her throat.

"Why don't you do it?" she asked as she stumbled slightly, "You seemed just fine with trying to kill us at the Festival..."

"Well, I would... But this is a new jacket," he said as he brushed some invisible dust off the front of it and smiled. "Now...say cheeeese!" he said as he pulled out his scroll and opened it. She saw the little red dot as he began to record her execution. She took a deep breath and narrowed her eyes, ready for her end to come. A sudden police siren made her jump and forced her to try and defend herself with her one arm. Looking out, she saw that everyone was looking to the side as blue and red lights began to flash behind them.

Taking this chance, Yang quickly ran down to the other end of the alley and shoulder bashed her
way into a locked building, but not before feeling a few shots ring out and feeling bullets hitting
her shoulder and hip. "Damn it! Emerald, After her!" he shouted as he began to deal with the local
law enforcement. Yang continued to run through buildings, breaking through windows and hiding
behind a counter as the mint-haired woman with dark skin ran past her.

"For fuck sakes!" she groaned out as she ran past Yang. With a heavy sigh, Yang got up from her
hiding place and began to walk through the store.

Coming up to the clerk, he looked at her with a shocked look in his green eyes. "Holy shit, Yang,
you okay?" he asked her as she walked past him and simply grabbed a green bottle off the shelf
and saw herself in the security footage above the counter. Her face had a large smear of blood
across her nose and cheek, her jacket and shirt had blossoming patterns of blood that her Aura was
already trying to heal from her gunshots, and her left hand was covered in blood and gore;
smeared the green bottle of alcohol in viscera. With a sigh, she began to stumble out of the store
and simply began to gulp down the contents of the bottle while heading back to her home.

Looking up at her house, she simply shook her head and tilted it back to swallow a mouthful of the
burning liquid as she stumbled past it and continued down the path that leads into the forest behind
her house. Finally, she stood in front of two stones on a cliff. On her left side, she saw Taiyang's
gravestone, his symbol chiselled into the rock with his name on it. "A noble man stood" was
written under his name.

All over the grave site, empty bottles littered the ground from when Yang came out here during her
drunken nights, crying to the dead and wishing they could come back to her. Taking another gulp,
the bottle slipped from her fingers to join the others as she looked up at the rising, shattered moon.
She remembered the words from Summer's funeral and decided that she would give her own
eulogy if she was to die today, her words broken and slurred as she called to the moon.

"Thus, kindly I scatter..."

Behind her, Emerald and Neo were behind three of the goons as they approached her. Standing in
the tree line, Emerald listened to her prayer and looked over at the small girl next to her. Neo
looked up and took a deep breath with a nod, the white and pink woman pulled her sword from her
umbrella as Emerald pulled out her revolver and the small scythe blade flipped out.

When Yang was done, she lowered her head and took a deep breath. "So, this is where you've
been?" a voice called out to her. Slowly turning around, Yang saw the dark-skinned Emerald and
the short multi-coloured Neo standing before her. Yang simply shrugged and flopped onto the
ground, causing the soft clinking of glass bottles rubbing against each other as she moved them out
of the way.

"Why not?" Yang asked as she pulled herself into a sitting position against her father's stone. "Here
lies the last person who ever loved me, I think it's a fitting end..." she said as she looked up at
Emerald. Her hair was a bit longer, tied in a low sitting ponytail on her back. She had a similar
jacket as Mercury had, only was green and it would only cover her chest if it was done up properly,
leaving her with a tight fitting cream top with her stomach exposed as well as a more modest
amount of cleavage showing. Neo, on the other hand, hadn't changed at all; still short, with her tri
coloured hair and long white jacket with a brown corset.

With a deep breath, Yang nodded slightly. "Well, get it over with...I'm ready."

Emerald just raised her eyebrow in disbelief. "What?"

"Wait," Yang said as she leaned over and reached across her body with her good hand and gripped
the bottle that slipped out of her fingers before, she held it up and shook it slightly. Hearing some sloshing inside, she quickly downed the contents with a few large gulps, letting some of it trail down her chin. Tossing the bottle over the edge of the cliff behind her, she did not hear it smash as she brushed her chin off with her hand, smearing even more blood across her face. "Now I'm ready."

A heavy sigh came from Emerald's lips as she shook her head lightly, "The great and powerful Yang Xiao Long, waiting for death like an old dog...Never thought I'd see the day..." Emerald simply walked up to Yang and looked down at her with a disappointed look on her face. Reaching down, she grabbed her by her armpit and hoisted the blonde up to her feet. "Get up, we're getting out of here."

Yang just blinked at her, trying to work out what she had just said. "What?"

"We. Are. Lea-ving," Emerald said slower as she stared into her eyes, "What language do I have to speak in order for you to understand?"

"Why, where are you bringing me?" Yang asked as she tugged free from her grip and wobbled around on drunk legs.

"Somewhere safe," The dark-skinned woman said as Neo nodded to her partner.

"Why? I thought you're trying to kill me," Yang stuttered out while looking at the two women before her.

"Mercury is because he's still listening to Cinder," Emerald said as she folded her arms over her chest, "We're trying to save you because we jumped ship." Another nod came from Neo as well as a sad smile. "We're taking orders from Ozpin now,"

"Ozpin...why?"

"I'd love nothing more than to play twenty questions with a drunk bimbo, but we need to leave before Mercury figures that we're not on the same side anymore," Emerald snapped at her. Then she turned to face Yang and gestured to her, "Hold your hand out."

Yang drunkenly obeyed and Neo pulled a familiar black glove and gold bracelet from her pocket and began to slip Ember Celica onto her wrist.

"Did you go into my house?" Yang asked as she jerked her hand away. The familiar weight on her wrist actually brought a small comfort to her.

"Doesn't matter, let's go," Emerald said as they began to walk back down the path quickly. Yang following the two of them. She noticed that there were three goons with their throats sliced open laying against the trees that edged the forest around the cliff. The walk was quiet until they reached her family home where Mercury and the rest of the goons were waiting for them.

"Well done ladies," Mercury smiled as he walked towards them, "Now put a bullet in her head and let's get the fuck off this rock..." He folded his arms and waited. When no one moved, he raised his eyebrow slightly and leaned forward a bit. "Did I stutter? Pop her and let's go!"

"No, Mercury," Emerald spoke as she took her weapons out and held them at her sides.

"What?"

"We're not working for Cinder anymore. This isn't what she promised us, and I can't keep
following her after what she made me do."

Mercury just shook his head in disbelief. "She'll kill you Em, she'll find you and make an example out of you," Mercury warned her as he tensed up, automatic rifles at the ready behind him.

Two quick finger snaps stole Yang's attention from Mercury to Neo. She smiled and gave a wink before walking in front of Emerald and took a deep bow at Mercury. "Goodbye Mercury," Emerald said as the man quickly kicked towards them, sending a round at the three women, only for them to shatter like glass in front of him.

"Fuck!" he shouted out as he began to try to sprint back to the air docks and their bullheads before they got away.

One minute, Yang was getting ready to punch the projectile that Mercury shot at them. The next, the area around of her changed as reality shattered like a broken mirror, suddenly the three of them were at the air docks where several Bullheads were docked and ready to take off. Yang shook her head as the sudden wave of nausea hit her and she doubled over, taking gasps of air to stop the last few hours of alcohol consumption from spilling all over her shoes.

"Ugh...I hate it when you do that..." Emerald said as she shivered despite the summer night and walked towards one of the ships. Following her, Yang stumbled towards one of the seats as Emerald walked up to the pilot's area and started to talk to him, "Hey, we're leaving now."

"But, what about the others?" he asked looking over at them. Emerald just sighed and shook her head.

"Neo, can you take care of this please, I can only deal with one idiot who keeps asking stupid questions at a time..." With a nod, Neo walked to the cockpit, pulling her blade out with a smooth motion. Yang watched as Emerald pull out a first aid kit and opened it up, pulling out gauze and tape. "Lift your shirt, we need to get those bullets out of you... Drunk idiot not activating your Aura," she mumbled. Yang simply shrugged her jacket off to expose her shoulder, the other woman prodded the bruising flesh with her fingertips and shook her head. "You already cauterized the wound somehow, I'm going to have to open you up to get them out..."

She took out a small knife and opened the wound again, Yang cried out as a pair of tweezers were shoved in as Emerald yanked out a chunk of metal and rubbing alcohol was haphazardly poured over the opened flesh. "Pants next," she said as she patched her shoulder up. With a slight blush, Yang leaned back in her seat as Neo dragged the now dead pilot out of the seat and threw him out the open door before taking his place in the cockpit. "Holy shit," Emerald said as she looked at Yang's half exposed hips. "When's the last time you trimmed the hedge?" she asked as she cut open the bullet hole and pried the bullet out of her.

"Shut up. I'm not very good with delicate manoeuvres with my left hand..." Emerald just smirked as she patched her up and lightly tapped her good shoulder. She handed Yang two pills and a bottle of water. Two quick finger snaps took Emerald's attention as Yang popped the pills into her mouth and wedged the bottle between her legs so she could open the cap. Swallowing the pills as well as half the bottle in a few deep gulps, the woman came back as the ship began to take off.

"We don't have enough fuel to get to where we need to go, so we're going to have to hike for a few days, probably." Yang simply shrugged as she took a breath and finished the bottle before tossing it to the side. "Get some sleep, Yang. We've got a long trip ahead of us." The blonde simply nodded limply and leaned back in her seat and took a deep breath. Her eyes drooped closed and allowed the
vibrations and rocking of the bullhead to lull her to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Surprise Mother fucker! Enemy update!

Nearly six hours and here's a new chapter. Just to let you guys know, I have a vague idea on how the story goes, I just start writing and hope its sounds good....

Not much for notes on this one, up next is Weiss! then I'm not sure who should have the next chapter...

If you liked it, leave a kudo if you haven't already. If you've already left a kudo, a comment saying you liked it goes a lot way! Feed back is always welcome and thank you for taking the time out of your day to read my maddness!


The Shattered Princess Pt: I

Chapter Notes

Hey! I added chapter titles to the previous chapters, I was kinda playing around with an idea and trying to figure out how many ways I could describe a person, so go back and check them out and let me know what you think of them.

This might be my darkest chapter yet, just a heads up.

And so, I present to you the last member of team RWBY:

The Shattered Princess

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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The Shattered Princess

Pt: I

"Her heart is played like well worn strings,

in her eyes the sadness sings,

of one who was destined for better things"

-Swan Song, Lang Leav

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A loud buzzer stole sleep away from Weiss early in the morning. Jolting upright, a sharp pain shot through the left side of her chest, earning a hiss from her lips. Looking around, it only took a moment for her to remember where she was. She was inside her small, eight by eight tent in the Atlesian base in Vacuo. With a sigh, she looked down at the tiny watch she wore while at base on the inside of her wrist and saw that it was six in the morning. With another groan, she pushed her feet off the side of the bed and looked at herself in the morning light that was dulled through the tent fabric.

She was wearing simple military underwear; white loose shorts and a fitting tank top with a silver chain necklace that held her dog tags gently bouncing against her chest. Gripping them, she slowly got to her feet and stretched her body; another spasm of pain rocked her chest as her hand gently held the bandage there. It had been wrapped around her chest to stop the bleeding from the gash that Ruby had given her the two days before; a stark reminder of the failed push into the last pocket of Vacuo Resistance in the area.

Peeling the tank top off, she walked over to the long thin mirror in her tent and began to unwind the
bandage and remove the bloody gauze to reveal a fresh scab and bright scar tissue forming thanks to her Aura. The wound went from under her left armpit to just above her left breast. The cold tags resting on her bare skin sent goosebumps across her skin as her gaze moved away from the new wound to her old ones.

Her skin held a collection of scars in a macabre variety. A bullet hole in her right shoulder, a few cuts along her arms and one stab wound to the left of her stomach. She remembered one bullet that grazed her neck, she gently traced the faded scar on the right of her jugular as she took in the rest of her body. She remembered how much Ruby had grown since the Fall and how beautiful she would have been, if she had not been trying to kill her. Shaking those thoughts from her head, she lowered her hands and grabbed her clothing from the hanger on the tent's centre pole.

The blue dress was repaired and cleaned the previous day. As she slipped into it, strapping the belt down and grabbing the plate armour that went over her chest, she clipped it into place and shifted it so it was comfortable over her small bust size. Finally, she tied her hair off to the side and inspected herself in the mirror once more to make sure she looked presentable before grabbing Myrtenaster and setting it on her hip on her way out into the camp.

Pushing past the tent flap, she looked back to pull it closed and saw the stencilled letters of SCHNEE on the side of the doorway. Every Specialist in the army got their own tent, as small as it was. Just one of the perks of being a State-Huntress in the Atlas Army; as well as being assigned all the dangerous missions, being in charge of anyone at any given time was another. Making sure her tent was closed, she began to walk across the military base towards the mess tent for breakfast.

All around her, the base came to life. DROVES of soldiers were being yelled at to get out of their bunks and form up out in front of their tents for PT in the morning sun before breakfast. She took a moment to watch as people ran out of tents while still throwing their helmets that covered most of their faces on and correcting uniforms as reached the main square where drill instructors were waiting, shouting at them the entire time.

After what had happened at the abandoned Vacuoan city of Ritrr, where Atlas forces were supposed to easily overwhelm what was left of the Vacuo Resistance, but they had failed. The ruined city was only important so that they could have a more fortified staging area for advancing through the desert and onto the rest of the continent. What they were not expecting was Valenese reinforcements to drop down within the city itself or have Huntsmen support in the form of Nora Valkyrie and Ruby Rose; or the moniker better-known to Atlesian Ground Forces: The Red Death. Weiss thought that it must have been someone else when that name had popped up in her briefings; her uncle Qrow maybe, but not Ruby Rose.

When she saw her on that field taking out a Paladin mech with such ease, like a child ripping the wings off a fly, it made her heart break. She remembered the small, innocent ball of hyperactive energy that Ruby once was and it made her hesitate. Her one mistake was underestimating her during their fight, and she nearly paid the ultimate price for it. She was shipped back to the main base in Vacuo rather than the firebase she was stationed at previously, since the medical staff thought her wound was worse than it seemed. One thing the normal military medical personnel never got was exactly how much a well-trained Aura could speed up normal healing.

Weiss watched as the Sergeants yelled at their soldiers as they began to jog down the length of the base in full gear under the morning Vacuo sun, chanting and singing a song as they ran in step. Weiss watched them go as she walked down the base's street and into the mess tent where breakfast was being served. Inside, the smells of poorly cooked food were overpowering, but that did not stop the regulars from consuming it with enough salt destroy their tongues just to mask the taste.
Several soldiers were already sitting around at tables, some were wearing the full military dress with armour plates, but a few wore the blue and white camo uniforms. Usually, officers and technical staff who had lived out here long enough figured what little relief from the heat was worth more than the protection. A few wore the camo pants and the white tank top as they ate. Getting in the lineup, she looked over the stale grey, stuff, for lack of a better term, and found that her appetite evaporated. Still, she loaded a plate full of hash browns, an egg that was cooked for way too long, and a cup of bad coffee to her tray before sitting down.

As she stared the food on her plate, her mind kept wandering back towards Ruby, and the look of steel in her eyes. If Blake hadn't been there, she would not be here, contemplating if what she was served was actually food or some new form of Grimm. Where the feline faunus came from or where she went afterwards was a complete mystery. Obviously, she wasn't working with Ruby, or else she would not have saved her, and she was not sided with Atlas or Weiss would have known.

"Specialist Schnee, Report to Lieutenant Colonel Argent at once!" the speakers boomed out all over the base. A few heads turned to watch her as she let out a small sigh and got up from her seat. She had not eat any of the food there; so she simply picked up the tray and she handed it to an enlisted soldier that just walked in so he did not have to wait in line. Striding across the base, she noticed people looking over in her direction; a Specialist wasn't that uncommon on the Vacuoan front, but she was not just any Specialist, she was Specialist Schnee. The name she had hated ever since she could remember, because of her father.

Walking into the command building, she walked past the Atlesian flag that was hanging on the wall, a white banner with the cog and spear, and past the set of doors that lead to the highest ranking man on the base. Lieutenant Colonel Argent was a tall, broad man with greying hair and pale grey colour to his irises that almost blended in with the rest of his eyes. He was wearing a white and blue camo uniform, crisp and clean with his rank on his shoulders. He had a habit of leaning back in his seat and folding his leg over the other with his knee resting on the desk itself. When she entered, she stood before his desk and came to attention. Back straight, chin up, she brought her right hand up in a sharp salute as she spoke out to him.

"Specialist Schnee, reporting Sir!"

"At ease," he said simply as he sat up and slipped his legs under the desk. He gestured for Weiss to sit down in the chair and she did so quickly. "How's your injury?" he asked of her when she was settled.

"Fine, sir. I'll be healed by tomorrow and I'll make my way back to Firebase Amelia the by the week out, sir" she quickly replied. She was not one to use an injury as an excuse to sit idly while others are struggling without her on the Front. Argent just nodded slowly before he cleared his throat.

"Good to hear, Schnee. However, you won't be going back to the Firebase or the Front anytime soon..." he informed her as he began to sift through the paperwork and found what he was looking for.

"What? Why not! I'll be perfectly fine tomorrow!" she shot out while looking at him, he simply raised his eyebrow and eyed her up. "Sir..." she quickly added while avoiding his glare at her little outburst.

"I know you'll be fine, Schnee. You're a good soldier, no one's doubting that," he said as he set the paper down and looked at her. "Now, I know that you're not one for leave..." Weiss sighed and pinched the bridge of her nose, realizing what was going on. "But with the number of leave requests I get from Brigadier General Schnee; I'm usually more than happy to 'accidentally' shred
the majority of them with the rest of the other letters that bare next to zero relevance."

"And I thank you for that, Sir," She said lightly. Her elder sister would send a request to Argent for Weiss to have leave on a monthly basis. Weiss loved her sister, but it felt like she was a little suffocating at times.

"You're welcome, I try to keep you out here as much as I can, but even my hands get tied up sometimes," he began as he handed a letter to her, "such as a leave request piggybacked on a direct order from the desk of one General Ironwood..."

Quickly grabbing the piece of paper from the officer, she scanned the order in front of her, making sure it wasn't some kind of mistake.

Attn: Lieutenant Colonel Victor Argent

Specialist Weiss Schnee is required at Atlas High Command for immediate reassignment.

Failure to acquiesce this request or keep this information confidential will be met with swift and dire consequences.

-General James Ironwood.

Weiss read the short letter another three times before handing it back with a shake of her head. "I had to dig out a dictionary to figure out what 'acquiesce' meant," he quipped offhandedly as he folded the letter and tore it in half three times before taking out a lighter and setting the paper ablaze. "Turns out, it means 'Shut up and fucking do it!'" He then pulled out a folder and quickly signed the documents, then handed her the leave papers. "Your boat leaves in half an hour."

Quickly getting out of her seat, Weiss snapped a salute and made her way out of the command building and towards her tent to collect her things. Packing a canvas duffle bag with the few personal effects she kept as well as her dress uniform, she made her way to the air pad where a large Atlesian Airbus was currently docked. Looking at those who were leaving the base for medical reasons and proper leave; she watched as three soldiers limped onto the ship, another was missing his arm, and the last had his head wrapped in so many bandages that the one armed man had to guide him to his seat. Hearing trumpets, she looked over and watched as two lines of soldiers stood at attention while a large number of coffins were loaded up onto another airship down the way on a different pad.

She watched as one casket after another was loaded up while the soldiers stood at attention, honouring their fallen. She wondered if some of those who were returning to Atlas to be buried in home soil were the direct effect of Ruby's interference with the assault. Handing the officer her leave papers, she found a seat in an area that was empty, threw her bag in the seat across from her, and sat down with a flop. Her rapier trapped between the wall and her leg, she rested her head on her left hand and stared out the window, her thumb absentmindedly tracing the scar over her eye. She sank into the seat as her eyes slowly closed, the need for more sleep quickly overtaking her.

When she opened her eyes, she was seventeen again. A heavy sigh escaped her lips as she rode in the back of an SDC car through downtown Atlas, her father having torn her away from her team
after what had happened at the Vytal Festival a few months ago. She was on her way back to the manor after meeting with her sister at the military base about how wrong it was that he forced her back to Atlas and had not even talked to her yet; he just thrust many duties of the company at her and expected them done with the perfection to be expected from a Schnee, all the while hating herself for the fact that she went with him without so much as a whimper of resistance to his orders.

Her arms were folded and she was staring out the window as the buildings covered in the winter snow zoomed past. She was tapping her foot on the floor of the car when the first explosion sounded in the distance. Looking up, she looked past the front seats through the windshield to see cars slow down to a stop as black smoke began to crawl into the crisp blue sky of Atlas. With a confused look on her face, she slowly grabbed her weapon when the second explosion shook the car violently.

Quickly getting out of the car, she saw people slowly getting to their feet as small rocks fell from the sky; yet some of the people stayed still, their bodies contorted into inhuman angles. Behind her, another explosion rocked the main street, followed by another three separate explosions further down the road, blowing up people and vehicles as everyone panicked and screamed. They were running in every direction in a blind panic, confused with everything that was happening around them.

Quickly rushing to the scene of the nearest explosion, she saw blood and rubble covering bodies that were half exploded along the streets and walls nearby. Shaking her head in numb disbelief, she quickly ran to a small girl and turned her over. Her blue eyes were wide open, a permanent look of shock on her face as her entrails spilt out and onto Weiss's clean white dress. Slowly, she brushed her fingers across her face and closed the child's eyes before she set her down slowly. Weiss stared at the lifeless body; she could not have been older than five or six. Slowly, people with weapons came into view, their uniforms were green and blue camouflage and their faces covered by black wool masks.

They rushed down the alleyway and began to open fire into the running people. Innocent lives were stolen in the blink of an eye as each bullet ripped through unarmoured and Auraless bodies. Fury ripped through Weiss's body as she jumped to her feet and rushed towards one of the random soldiers; stabbing him from behind and running him through with the tip of her rapier. He cried out for a second before she pulled back and let his body fall limply to the ground. Taking a closer look at the dead soldier, she saw a patch sewn into his right arm; a lantern with rays of light coming from it.

Mistral was attacking Atlas.

How could they do this? Why would they do this? These were innocent people and they were just slaughtering them like cattle! Gritting her teeth, she ran back out to the street in time to witness an Atlesian dropship getting blown out of the sky. Following the smoke trail to where the rocket came from, she sprinted past burning cars to a building where a squad of Mistrali soldiers were readying another shot for the next wave of military police to fly in.

She busted through the door, using her time dilation glyph to make her faster than they could react. She stabbed the first person, sliced the next one across the throat as she pulled out, and sent another into a wall with the force of her next glyph; a sick crack echoed as he landed. A slash over a chest and a stab through the throat killed the last of them. Running out to the street, she regrouped with Atlas soldiers as they began to take cover behind cars and in alleys while a full assault to retake the city streets began.
Explosions and bullets echoed through the city for the entire day and night. She watched as three Atlesians were consumed by flames when a car they were using as cover exploded. A building exploded and collapsed on another six as they tried to clear it. With no energy to mourn for them and hopped up on adrenaline, Weiss continued down the street, helping block by block to clear the streets of the Mistrali terrorists as they continued to take more and more innocent lives.

She stopped once when she saw a man sobbing as he carried the lifeless form of a child down the street, crying and shouting out for help from anyone who could hear him. Weiss watched as he exploded when he stepped on something she later learned was an IED (Improvised Explosive Device), sending gore and concrete as well as metal shards from the bomb in a three-metre radius.

The fighting continued on through the night and finally stopped when the morning had come. With nowhere to go, the last of the Mistrali forces surrendered and came out of a building they were using as a base. Weiss, as well as three entire squads of soldiers, had weapons trained on them. They had their hands on their heads and were on their knees when Atlas military police began to move in to arrest them in order to take them in for questioning. She caught the eye of one of them and he smiled a grim smile beneath green eyes with slit irises. It was then she saw the wires coming out from his sleeve and ending in his hand.

"Wait!-" she tried to call out before the ten Mistrali soldiers, as well as twenty Atlesians, were consumed by flames. Weiss slowly got up from the explosions, ears ringing and numbness spreading throughout her body. This whole attack was a suicide mission from the beginning, none of them were planning on being alive when the morning came. Walking numbly with her mind barely clear, covered in blood, soot and gore, Weiss walked down the street, passing dead bodies until she saw half of the Schnee manor destroyed and in flames. Slowly, she began to make her way towards it; she still needed to speak to her father.

Waking up with a sudden shake, she gripped her weapon and looked all around her. No one was near her; they had just landed in Atlas. With a sigh, she got up and pulled the bag over her shoulder as she made her way to the exit ramp. The frigid cold of Atlas, even during the summer, was a much welcome reprieve from the hot winds of Vacuo. Taking a deep breath of home, she began to make her way off the ship and towards the military offices that were nearby.

Showing her ID to the guards, she walked through the halls and knocked on a door that said Brigadier General Schnee on the placard. "Come in," a woman called out quickly. Opening the door, Weiss quickly walked in and saw her sister sitting behind a desk, staring at paperwork with three different scroll tablets open on different pages scattered around the already cluttered desk.

Quickly snapping to attention, Weiss saluted Brigadier General Schnee, "Ma'am!"

Looking up, Winter struggled to her feet and snapped a salute back. "Specialist," she said quickly. Both of them lowered their arms and shared a small smile.

"Winter," Weiss said quietly.

"Weiss." Winter smiled as she walked around the desk with a heavy limp, leaning on a cane as she stood in front of her younger sister. Winter had been hurt badly by a Mistral surprise attack a few months ago and was still getting used to her new artificial leg. Weiss knew that her sister hated sitting here while she fought; but it was still going to be another couple of months, probably close to a year until she would be ready to fight again. Even then, she wouldn't be allowed on the Front with her recent promotion to Brigadier General. "How are you?" Winter asked as she leaned on the cane.
"Good," Weiss said lightly, "Our advances went without much resistance until Ritrr where-

**Thwack**

"OW!" Weiss cried out as Winter whipped her cane around and smacked her in the head.

"Shut up, you boob," Winter said with a barely perceptible smile, "I know what happened; I've already read the reports. I'm asking how you are. Have you been sleeping well? Are the enlisted soldiers harassing you?"

Weiss sighed and shook her head. "I'm fine, Winter," she said as she moved in and hugged her sister slowly.

Winter wrapped her arms around her younger sister and held her close. "You should come home more often, I worry about you."

"I know, but there's still fighting to be done. As soon as this meeting with Ironwood is over, I'll be going back."

Winter raised her eyebrow. "Ironwood asked for you?" Weiss nodded while looking at her sister oddly. "He's out for the next few days, I have to pick up his slack while he's out trying to recruit more Huntsmen to fill Specialist roles," the elder sister said as she released Weiss, who made a confused face as she took a step back.

"Strange, he asked me to come immediately; and why is he personally recruiting Huntsmen for Specialists positions?"

Winter was quiet for a moment before speaking quietly. "Specialist Coal and Katt were KIA in Mistral just a few days ago, bringing the Specialist units in Mistral to under ten operatives now."

The Second Assault was still ongoing in Mistral, but she had read that they were being pushed back after heavy losses; assaulting a desert was a lot easier than storming a swamp. Weiss' eyes widened as she wrapped her mind around that. "How? They were some of the best?"

"A man with blond hair carrying around two sets of swords and shields and wielding them with extreme skill. We're still working on who he is," she said as she returned to her desk and began to go through paperwork once more. "I'll meet you at your home tonight, we can discuss more over dinner." Weiss nodded with a deep breath as she turned to leave Winter's office. "Oh, Weiss," Looking back at her sister, she saw Winter wearing a slightly sadder face than before, "While you're here, you should go visit him..."

"Sure," Weiss softly spoke before she then walked out of the office and shortly after the building, where a car was waiting for her. An older man with puffy, grey hair and a moustache opened the rear door when she saw her exit the building.

"Miss Schnee," he said with a small smile. Smiling back at him softly, she knew this driver for almost her entire life. He was with her when Mistral attacked.

"Thank you, Heartwood," she said as she slipped into the seat and he gently closed the door behind her. When he got into the driver's seat, he looked at her through the rearview mirror and spoke.

"The apartment, Miss Schnee?"

"Afterwards, I want to go to the manor and see him..." With a nod, the car started up and they began to drive down the streets of Atlas towards the countryside where the Schnee Manor resided.
It was funny, everything was so perfect that no one would have guessed that there was an attack that took the lives of nearly five hundred people just three years ago, in the winter just after the Fall of Vale. The silent ride was longer than she remembered when they arrived at the Manor. Getting out, she left her bag in the car and held Myrtenaster by her side as she walked through the cold walls of the white castle.

She walked through the halls and past the paintings of the Schnees from her great-grandfather and grandfather to herself, Winter, and Whitley. Quietly she entered the garden in the back, walking past the flowers that only bloomed in the cold soil of Atlas and towards the back where two small plaques sat in a bed of grass. Looking down at them, she read the name of her mother, Willow. She had been buried where she died in the fire on that day, but Weiss had long ago accepted that her mother had effectively buried herself here years prior; when she began drinking herself into a stupor here almost constantly after the death of Nicholas Schnee… After saying a short prayer in the hopes that her mother had finally ended up in a better place, she looked down to the the name of her father, who had died the day after the Mistrali attack three years prior. She slowly began to grit her teeth at the memory of that man. Even dead, he still infuriated her to no end. Weiss was with him when he passed that day.

She had ensured it.

When she walked into the half-destroyed manor after the attack, servants were running back and forth between looting anything they could get their hands on and helping those who were injured. When one of them saw her, he stared at her, his arms filled with silver knives and spoons. She could care less about the blatant theft in front of her; she just waved him off and continued to walk through the house, tired, bloodied and soiled. Eventually, she found her father in his room. The in-manor medical staff had wrapped him up in bandages and had him plugged into a machine with soft beeps coming from it, filling his lungs with air as he did his best to breathe.

When she entered, several staff members left, leaving only Heartwood and the family doctor in the same room as Weiss and her father. He was missing an arm and both legs and had a bag of blood hooked up to his last remaining arm. What exposed skin he did have was red and burnt from the explosion she assumed had hit him. With a tube down his throat, he could not say anything to her; but his cold eyes said everything: Weiss Schnee. You are a failure. In her numb state from fighting all night, she shook her head sadly. He looked so vulnerable; like a single breath could tear his soul from his body.

So, weak.

The Schnee part of her brain began to work overtime. She looked at his weakness and felt disgusted. This was the man who had drilled perfection into her mind, body, and soul; and here he was just laying in his own weakness. How dare he. How dare he!

Slowly, she leaned over him and laid a gentle kiss on his forehead. Steeling her eyes into the cold Schnee glare that only came with the bloodline, she turned her gaze just enough to eye up the small beeping machine that was keeping him alive. Placing her thumb against the power switch, she looked back at her father. His eyes went wide in horror from what she was about to do; she was going make sure he would never ruin her life or the life of anyone else EVER AGAIN. "Goodbye father," she whispered to him as she put the slightest amount of pressure on the switch and flicked it off, filling the room with silence.

Heartwood and the doctor simply stared in shock as the head of the Schnee family, with ragged
breaths that were quickly becoming harder and harder to accomplish, looked between them and his daughter. Blood filling his lungs and choking on the tube, his body began to convulse and spasm. He thrashed against the bed, leaving the wet stains of burnt blood in the sheets as he tried desperately to turn the machine back on. His fingers were about to brush the switch to give his life back, but Weiss gently nudged the machine just beyond his reach with her foot.

His arm fell down off the side of this bed as a trail of blood began to trickle out of the side of his mouth. Blood bubbles filled with his last breath escaped the pool of blood in his mouth as he stared at her with his cold, dead glare. When it was all over, Weiss clicked the machine back on and it began to pump blood and oxygen back into a corpse.

No one moved for a long few moments before Heartwood cleared his throat and looked over at the doctor. "A shame really," he said, "Master Schnee died just before Miss Schnee could say her goodbyes." The doctor looked at one of the nicest men in her life and her dead father and nodded as he pulled out a pen to begin to write something down on a clipboard.

"Yes, a shame," the doctor agreed, "He passed...three minutes before she arrived?" He checked his wristwatch while looking up at Heartwood.

"I think it was five minutes before she arrived"

"So it was..." the doctor said as he filled in the time of death on the form, closed her father's eyes, and pulled the blanket over his face. Just like that, she had committed patricide in a room with two other people there and had suffered zero repercussions; they had even helped her cover it up. She did not feel better about it; in fact, she was rather disappointed in it. A man she feared her entire life was not killed by her sword, or a gun, or an accident; but by a tiny fucking button.

Afterwards, Heartwood explained to Winter that their father had died from his injuries before Weiss arrived. She held her sister until the numbness wore off and the reality of what she had done set in. She had killed more people than she could count and seen the horrors of war before her very eyes. Weiss finally broke down in her arms, crying for the people she had killed and those she could not save; but not a single tear was shed for her own father.

Tasting copper, she released her bottom lip from her teeth and remembered where she was. Staring down at his grave, she ground her teeth just a bit harder and spat red onto his plaque before turning and storming back through the house to where Heartwood was waiting. Opening the door, she got in and folded her arms. "I want to go home," she said as her driver simply nodded and began to drive. She had gotten the apartment while the manor was being rebuilt and ended up just deciding to stay there.

She carried her bag and weapon in and threw both on the couch before walking to the bathroom and starting a bath. Stripping off the blue dress and the breastplate, she took off her underwear before slipping into the hot water and letting out a grateful groan as her muscles began to unwind in the hot water. Running her hand through her hair, she continued to let the hot water relax her body as her mind began to wonder once again.

Three days after the attack on Atlas, she went to the military office and applied to become a Specialist. The training was hard and she went to her bunk most nights covered in cuts and bruises from the brutal Atlesian Special Forces Training. Along with several other Huntsmen and Huntresses-in-training who applied for the advanced training program after the attack, she
became a State Huntsman in the Atlas Military Special Operations Unit and were deployed during the First Assault.

Atlas bombed Vacuo’s capital with containers of weaponized Dust first and the ground forces moved in afterwards to mop up any resistance. Weiss remembered walking through the bomb-out city and dispatching any Vacuoan who tried to attack her, but it was shortly after the infantry moved in when the Grimm attacked in force. They were forced to pull back out within two hours after taking the city when the living tsunami of Grimm crashed over the city; killing a fair amount of Atlas military personnel who were too slow to get to the escape ships and anyone else who was unfortunate enough to remain by that point.

Weiss was killing Grimm left and right. Beowolves and Ursi appeared and disappeared all around her. She was using her Dust to explode cars and take out entire patches of the living nightmares, but she would have been quickly overwhelmed if she had not summoned her Knight to save her. It cleaved both buildings and Grimm in half as she got away, until it was overwhelmed as a Nevermore tackled it to the ground and began to claw and peck at it; rendering it back into the Dust it was created from. She watched as Vacuo became a mirror image of Vale; a ruined city consumed by flames and Grimm because of an attack on people by other people.

The First Assault then regrouped south of Vacuo to set up a base of operations and begin their advance south, meeting the Vacuo Resistance with overwhelming firepower. Over the past three years, Weiss lead no less than five different attacks amounting to the victory of Atlas forces over Vacuo Resistance further south. That was until Ritrr and the reappearance of Ruby Rose.

Looking down into the water, she saw that the clear liquid turned a light pink hue. Confused, she looked around until she brought her hand up and saw her nails. She realized that she had been picking at her scab while lost in her memories and was now bleeding into the water. Breathing out a curse, she drained the tub and ran a shower to wash the blood water off of her. Afterwards, she pressed a white towel against the wound that Ruby had inflicted upon her until it stopped bleeding and then dried off with another towel. Walking around her apartment with a towel wrapped around her body and another around her hair, she cooked herself a simple meal (and by simple, meaning that she put a frozen dinner into the microwave in her kitchen); which was ten times better than any of the muck she ate while out in the field. She changed into a pair of panties and a loose shirt as she ate the dinner while thinking of Ruby and how much she had changed.

Her hair was longer than before, with longer red streaks that seemed too natural to be dyed as Weiss had suspected back at Beacon. She had grown to be a beautiful young woman, filling out curves that made Weiss both jealous and wanting at the same time.

Ruby was far from the shirt bursting bust size of her older sister, but that still left Weiss torn between envy and the lust for her. While she wanted nothing more to admit her feelings for the young Rose, the lost innocence in her silver eyes chilled her to the bone.

Remembering how she danced through the battlefield like a ghost in the wind was breathtakingly beautiful and just as terrifying. She had become the living embodiment of Death, reaping the souls of men just as easily as she annihilated the Grimm. Ruby would have killed her with ease. It just went to show how much she had grown in the years apart. Her will seemed ironclad as she showed no hesitation to fight when Weiss would not back down. She thought about how fearful the Red Death was on the battlefield... and how the innocence of youth died in times of war.

A knock brought her ever-wandering mind back into focus. Getting up from her seat, she opened the door a crack to see her sister leaning on her cane. "Winter," Weiss said with a small smile as
she opened the door wider to allow her in. Winter smiled as she limped into the apartment and closed the door behind her.

"Did you go see him?" she asked as she saw the canvas bag on the couch and the discarded meal on the table.

"Yes, I paid my respect like a good daughter." Weiss's cold voice would have frozen water if it were near. "I don't understand how you can live there..."

"It's easier when I'm not there most days," Winter replied as she looked around her sister’s apartment, "I sleep at the office for weeks at a time it seems. There's a cot there, so it's not all that bad." Weiss nodded as Winter raised her eyebrow slightly. "I see that you've already eaten..."

Weiss nodded again and closed her tired eyes. "Sorry, I hadn't eaten all day..."

"And you feel that a microwave meal and half a box of cookies are enough?"

Weiss looked back at the kitchen table and noticed the box of cookies; one half eaten, sitting on the edge of the container. When she had bought them in the first place escaped her at the moment, and when she grabbed them to eat with her dinner was an even bigger mystery. With a sigh, the younger Schnee pinched the bridge of her nose and shook her head. *I need to stop thinking so much or I'll fall off of something...*

"You look tired." Winter leaned in and kissed Weiss's head. "We'll do lunch tomorrow?"

Weiss nodded gently. "If you're not too busy."

With a smile, Winter hugged her sister once more before opening the door. "Tomorrow it is then..."

"Goodbye sister," Weiss replied as she closed and locked the door behind Winter. Leaving the food on the table, Weiss went to her bedroom; grabbing her weapon and laying it on the bed next to her before turning off the lights. With a heavy sigh, she closed her eyes and allowed sleep to pull her into a dream of better days.

Chapter End Notes

GOD DAMNIT! I really should be writing Vision but I just can't stop!

Also, to anyone who received an email notification on this- (Thanks a bunch, I have no idea how many people suscribed to me or this story but that really means a lot to me) - Sorry about you getting a notification at Balls o'clock in the morning. I'm terrible about writing at a decent time...

Thank you to everyone who left a kudo before, if you liked it, leave a kudo if you haven't already, leave a comment, I love reading how much you guys like reading this. As always, thank you for taking the time for reading my madness.
He sat on a rock, whetstone in hand, dragging it along the edge of Crocea Mors. The methodical scrapes echoed through the fog, the matching shield was resting next to him. All around Jaune Arc, the makeshift camp of the Mistrali army was bustling with busy people; going from tent to tent, person to person. Most of them left him alone, as they had learned that he liked his space. With a few more scrapes on his blade, he lifted it to admire its edge, tilting it from side to side to ensure it was even on from all angles, catching a glimpse of himself in the metal.

He looked into his own dead blue eyes. His blond hair was scraggly and unkempt, resting just above his shoulders. A large scar ran across the bridge of his nose down his right cheek, slipping under his dark stubble, a parting gift from those who betrayed him; the woman who he thought was his friend, the man who he regarded as a brother, and the girl he thought wanted to save the world.
Gritting his teeth, he gripped the handle and deftly spun the blade in his hand, slamming it home inside its sheath built into the shield. Reaching over his left shoulder, he pulled out his second sword and looked at the scarred weapon that was Miló. Running his fingers gently over the red and yellow steel, two bands of sharpened bronze pieces fused the weapon back together. He did his best to stop the tide of memories from crashing over him. His eyes teared up as he traced the handle of the blade, at the end of it was two charms; two identical, teardrop-shaped emeralds attached by tiny chains.

He remembered when the four of them managed to sneak their way back into Beacon Academy, past the roaming Grimm and the destroyed buildings, three years ago. It took all of his efforts not to fall to his death as he climbed the thick metal wire during the long, difficult climb to the top of the elevator shaft. When he reached the top, he saw the large frozen Dragon that stared at them with lifeless eyes. The four of them had their weapons ready for anything, but the creature did not stir and no Grimm came close to them. For whatever reason, the other Grimm were drawn to it but feared to be near it.

The four of them spread out slowly, stepping over broken glass and scraps of the building. He remembered looking over the side, seeing how far they were up, and being painfully aware that he would have more than enough time to reflect on his short life several times before he hit the bottom. It was Ruby that called him over, it was Ruby that reminded him of his own failures, and he reminded her of her own.

He was brought back to his senses when a jeep rolled up near him, a regular soldier wearing royal blue and deep green camouflage jumped out and ran up to the commander's tent, Jaune could sense something was wrong by how urgently he stormed past the flap that marked the entrance. Standing, he slipped Miló back over his left shoulder, attached Akoúo̱ to his back and slipped Crocea Mors on his left hip.

As he made his way across the boundary that people had made for him, his armour clanked as he strode past the soldiers who simply acknowledged him as sir or snapped a salute at him. He ignored them for the most part. He was never actually part of the Mistrali army, but through his fighting during the Second Great War, he had earned their respect. He had fought to protect their home, but that was a lie.

He fought to protect Her home.

As he passed the tent, he could hear two people arguing about something. He was going to ignore it until one of them threw open the flap and stared at him. "Lad! Come here!" the commander said. Jaune stared at him for a moment before ducking into the dimly lit covering, walking past the commander as he held the flap open. He was a tall man with olive skin and dark hair. He wore the standard Mistrali coloured uniform as he stroked the large beard on his chin. Very few people in the army grew beards, fewer still wore their hair in a braid that wrapped around their heads. That alone marked him as a Mistrali Commando. A Spartan. Mistral's finest soldiers.

Though Atlas was criticised for having a fully formed military, other kingdoms still practised their traditions that made a kingdom strong in the days before rifles and proper Hunters. The Spartans from the kingdom of Mistral were one of the outcomes of these time honoured traditions. The Spartan commander gestured to the table and the man who was sitting in one of the chairs. He was the one from the jeep. His dark blonde hair was short, framing a muscular jawline that was common in Mistrali people. "Mind telling him what you told me?" the commander said as he walked up to the table that had a paper map in the middle of it.

The man sighed and shook his head. "The Atlesians are coming in from the north-west," he said as
he placed a white and blue arrow block on the map and began to push it towards the green and blue arrows that pointed in the other direction, "we have no way of stopping their vanguard from cutting between our forces and flanking us on both sides as the main army comes in." To prove his point, he pushed a smaller Atlas arrow across the paper between two Mistrali markers and shook his head.

Jaune took one look at the map and took in all the details he needed. While he was studying it, the commander placed his hand on his shoulder and looked over at him. "What do you see, lad?" he asked.

Jaune deftly pointed and gestured, "We have the advantage with the terrain." His voice had gotten deeper in the years since he left Vale and he had grown a little taller and developed broader shoulders. "The way they are trying to come in, they'll have to go through the swamps; and there's only one way in if they want to drag all their heavy equipment with them. The path is too small for Paladin walkers since they'll just sink. The only path they can take is through this old temple, here. If you defend the temple ruins, you'll hold the flank."

The man just shook his head. "There's no time to get our men there with all of our equipment, only enough time to get the fuck out of here before they start showing up and blowing the shit out of everything." He tapped the map impatiently.

Jaune simply turned around and started to walk out of the tent. "Then I will hold it."

With that, he left the tent, leaving the two men. The man shook his head and looked up at the commander. "Who the hell is that kid?" he asked.

The commander simply sat down and took a deep breath. "That kid is the Knight-Spartan," he said as he looked at the map.

The man looked at the door flap and shook his head. "That? That was the Knight-Spartan? The Valenese Hunter that fought against Atlas's second wave assault and survived?"

The commander simply nodded and looked at the door flap as well. "And he killed two entire regiments in a single night before they could ambush our transports."

The man shook his head. "Why is he fighting for us anyways? He's Valenese, he should be with the Reclamation Army, not us..."

"He is looking for an honourable death in the eyes of a higher power," the commander said sadly as he looked back at the map.

"I wasn't aware that he believed in Gods or Fates," the man said as he pulled out a flask and took a sip of it.

The commander simply shook his head. "Not a God. A ghost."

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When Jaune reached the ruins of the temple, he found the spot where he was going to meet his enemy head-on. Before the battle he knelt down in the middle of the stone floor like a traditional Mistrali warrior. He had chosen his arena carefully. In a circular area of twenty feet all around him, broken pillars that once held up a roof now stood defiant as nature tried to return the stone to the earth. They measured off five-foot spaces between each of them all around him. Closing his eyes, he took a deep breath as he waited for the enemy to come. The sounds of birds echoed through the air periodically as swamp creatures stirred lightly; the only sounds that came to him. As he kept his
eyes closed, his other senses became hyper-aware of everything around him.

His once white armour was dented, scarred, and dirty. Etched into the breastplate, just over his heart, he had carved Pyrrha's emblem in with Crocea Mors when he first began to walk down this path. His clothing had changed as well; he now wore a tight black tee and dark green pants, his leather gloves were reinforced with bronze plating that went up against his forearms, his simple shoes changed out for boots and bronze greaves that reached halfway to his knees. As he waited, his mind began to drift once more. Gritting his teeth, he forced the memories into submission, pushing them back into the deepest pits of his mind, but they refused to go away.

Walking up to Ruby, the look on her face told him that this is where she had died. Slowly, each of them produced a piece of Miló and presented them to him. Sadly, he gently took each piece and carefully set them in his pack, determined to bring them back to her family when they reached Mistral. As he put the pack back on, his eyes caught a faint glint of brown metal. Slowly, he reached into a pile of snow and gently dug out her circlet headpiece and held it gently in his hands. He couldn't stop the tears from falling off his face; gently falling onto the cold, dead metal, freezing the droplets on contact.

Slowly and carefully, he began to brush the dust and snow off of it, cleaning it so it would be presentable for her parents. "I'm sorry, Jaune," Ruby had said to him. In that moment, his heartbreaking sorrow turned to hatred filled grief. Gritting his teeth, he gripped the metal in his hand tightly as anger took hold of him.

"You let her die..." Jaune whispered as he released the bronze circlet and gently slid it into his pack. While everyone stared at him, he placed the pack on the ground slowly as he repeated his words. "You let her die".

He listened to them beginning to back away from him. Packs dropped to the ground as weapons were drawn.

"Jaune! I'm sorry. I'm so sorry," Ruby said as she slowly opened Crescent Rose.

"Jaune..." Nora's voice was weary as Magnhild was brought out.

"Jaune, please calm down!" Ren said to him, trying to be the voice of reason.

Anger and hatred spilt over as Jaune pulled out his sword with one quick, smooth motion while his shield snapped onto his arm, turning and sprinting towards his former friends, he screamed at them.

"You let her die!"

The sounds of footsteps brought him from his memories. His eyes opened and he looked up, past the pillars and into the fog, watching forms become Atlesian soldiers filing towards him. When they saw him, they began to draw their weapons and aimed their rifles at him. From where he knelt he had a clear view of the rank walking towards them. Slowly, they began to spread out when they entered the circular arena with pillars covering it.

Reaching behind him, he pulled Akoúo off his back and gently placed it on the ground. Bringing his sword out, he gently placed the tip against the bronze disc and held it straight up. They surrounded him with their rifles trained on him, he could see the red dots of their sights dance across his chest. He took a deep breath as they began to approach him, demanded him to drop his
weapon as he spoke the words of his partner, his friend, his goddess.

"For it is in passing that we achieve immortality..." The lead soldier began to walk towards him, weapon trained on his head.

"Through this, we become a paragon of virtue and glory to rise above all..." Slowly, the soldier began to lower his rifle and began to reach out for his sword.

"Infinite in distance and unbound by death. I release your soul, and by my shoulder-" Inch by inch, he reached out towards the sword, his hand trembling as he got closer to the praying blond knight.

"Protect thee." With a sudden jerk of his arm, his blade came up and sliced the man's arm in a single motion. Blood splattered against the white plate armour and the pillars around them as Jaune stood with his swing. The man began to scream out as he kicked the shield up with his foot, it flipped around in the air until Jaune caught it on his left arm, it snapped into place on the metal gauntlet and bashed the armless man away and into a broken pillar. Jaune then began to run between the stone pillars as they began to open fire on him.

He chose this area for this very reason, with the pillars so close together they couldn't follow him very easily with their bullets, so they were forced into melee combat. Jumping around the pillars, their bullets either hit and buried themselves into the ancient stone or bounce off dangerously. Rounding one of the pillars, Jaune slashed down, cutting a man open from his shoulder to opposite hip. He left the soldier to fall to the ground as he continued on his way to kill everyone around him. With the adrenaline pumping through his system, he saw everything moving in slow motion. Torrents of crimson painted the ground and the stones surrounding him, adding colour to the faded and aged ruin.

As he ducked and weaved around the pillars, the soldiers discarded their rifles in favour of their close quarter blades, but that would only bring their end closer. As more soldiers poured in from the path, their bodies began to pile up on the ground in a mass of flesh and blood. His head began to throb as memories began to blend together with reality. The few times a medical professional had talked to him, they had diagnosed him with PTSD; the older Spartans had described this phenomenon as coming onto a Blood Drunk. To Jaune, it only meant that he had to relive those few minutes of pure anger and hatred he felt for his friends.

For the moment, he was cutting the throat open of a soldier in Atlas plates, blood sprayed across his face as he leaps over the falling corpse and began to charge towards Ruby. He screamed out as his blade came down and she blocked it with her scythe. The weight of his attack sent the small red girl sliding across the cold, snow-covered floor. From his left, Nora screamed out at him as she swung her hammer at him. He ducked under it and tackled her shield first and knocked her down to the ground, knocking her into a pillar. The Atlas soldier's body was crushed by heavy stone as it crumbled on top of her.

Feeling his memories taking hold of him, he grit his teeth and took deep breaths. During this time, a man with a glowing red blade charged towards him and took a slice at the knight. Jaune quickly blocked and parried the attack, but in his Blood Drunk, the Atlas blade had cut across his right arm. He felt blood drip down his arm as he bashed the man's head with his shield, stunning him long enough to reach back and slash the edge of the Akoúō across his throat. Following the momentum, his left arm hovered above his right shoulder for a moment before he threw his arm back out, releasing the shield in one smooth motion.

The bronze disc began to bounce off the pillars, slashing open throats of three soldiers who were unfortunate enough to be in its way before lodging itself inside the face of a fourth. He fell to the ground as people began to run away from him, retreating out of fear. Reaching down, he grabbed
the other part of Crocea Mors and opened its shield. His eyes darted up and saw a firing squad of five people take up positions in front of him and unload their rifles. Quickly crouching down, he made as small of a target as he could; as rounds bounced off his metal shield, a few found his arms and legs that weren't behind the chunk of metal attached to his left arm.

He stood when he heard the sounds of them reloading their weapons, his body began to glow as he pushed his Aura though his muscles, his wounds healing almost instantly save for a few trails of blood where the wounds first appeared.

They stared at him as his body glow began to fade away. Gripping his weapons, he began to charge towards them, his blade coming down and cutting a rifle in half. Spinning with the momentum, the blade came back around and was blocked by Ren. The young man grunted under the strain of his strength as he forced Jaune to the side. "Jaune! You need to calm down!" Ren called out to him. Gritting his teeth, Jaune stood up and pointed his blade at him.

"NO! She let Pyrrha die Ren! She could have saved her but she didn't!" Jaune yelled at a soldier. Jaune then charged at Ren again, their blades clashing in the tower as Ruby and Nora recovered from Jaune's assault on them. "She's failed her as much as I have, we all failed her, Ren!" The two of them slashed and blocked against each other as Ren danced around Jaune. Coming down with both blades of Storm Flower, Jaune blocked him with his shield and kicked him hard in the stomach.

With a thunderous yell, Nora swung her hammer at Jaune once again. Feeling something click inside of him, his body glowed brightly as Magnhild collided with his arm, but Jaune didn't move. Instead, all the force that Nora used to strike Jaune was sent right back to her, throwing her into a pile of snow. Slowly, Nora began to get to her feet, using her hammer for help, her back to Jaune.

Walking towards another soldier in an Atlas uniform, the man was using a pillar to get to his feet. He saw Jaune walking towards him and drew his blade with a shaky hand, Jaune simply slashed it out of his hand and reached back and thrust the blade into the stomach of Ren. He had jumped in front of Jaune, protecting Nora from the stab that Jaune intended for her. "REN!" Nora screamed as she held onto the young man who collapsed to the floor. Blood seeped from his mouth as Nora tried to hold his stomach together, a crimson tide coming through her fingers.

Jaune was about to deliver another killing blow when a large silver and red blade appeared in his vision. He only had a split second to lean to the side before Crescent Rose tore his face open. Rolling to the side, he felt blood fall over his face, Ruby's face contorted in anger with tears falling down her red cheeks. With a scream, she charged towards him, swinging her weapon wildly. Jaune blocked and parried the best he could as they danced around the top of the tower. During her attack, she had clipped Jaune's pack and sent it flying over the edge.

Despair washed over him as he watched the canvas bag slide across the floor, Jaune chased after it as it fell over the side and began to plummet to the ground below. Grabbing the pack mid-air, he twisted his body around and stabbed his sword into the side of the building and fought through the pain as his arm was pulled out of his socket as he slowed his descent. Landing on the ground, he began to make his way through a Grimm infested Vale and towards Mistral. To deliver what was left of Pyrrha to her final resting place.

Dropping the soldier to the ground, he saw someone walking towards him through the fog from the same direction as the other soldiers. He didn't wear the usual Atlesian armour. Instead, he wore some sort of suit; black pants with white pinstriping going down the legs. He wore white Atlas breastplate over a black vest and a white shirt. His dark skin brought contrast to the white plate as he placed a black fedora with a blue ribbon along it on top of his head. He adjusted his rectangular
sunglasses on his face as a woman appeared from behind him. She had massive red pigtailstrue with blue streaks running along her bangs. The same Atlas plate covered her chest; her stomach and arms exposed as well as a short pink skirt covering her thighs. She seemed to be sliding to the side, gently gliding on her roller skates as she swung the nunchucks in her hand. Jaune watched as her tail twitched slightly as the two of them watched him; the blond man slowly made his way back to the centre of the chosen arena, the ground stained with blood and bodies, getting ready to deal with a pair of Atlesian Hunters.

Lifting his shield up to cover his body, he held his blade at the ready as the dark-skinned man licked his lips and lifted his trumpet to his mouth. With a deep breath, he blew into its Dust activated mechanisms as the other began to flank him; using her speed to her advantage, softly talking to herself, "Never miss a beat, never miss a beat, never miss a beat..."

Flinching at the ear piercing noise that flooded his head, he gritted his teeth and began to charge towards the source, only to be intercepted by the woman. Her glowing blue nunchucks began to fly around him as Jaune began to block and back up from her quick assault, only to be thrown off his feet by another blast of the man's trumpet weapon. Before she could capitalize on his position, he flipped onto his feet and blocked a kick from her skate. Spinning her with his shield, he brought his foot up to her back and kicked her towards the man; the two of them crashed together, stopping their momentum enough for Jaune to shift to the offensive.

Coming down with a slash, their Auras flashed as his blade slashed against each of them in turn until she sped away, leaving just the two of them. Jaune began to press the man, but he seemed elusive as he backed up with quick movements. With another deep breath, Jaune got pushed by his weapon as three other forms of himself appeared, each having a different coloured ribbon on their hats. Combining their powers, they sent Jaune flying across the arena and into a pillar. Falling to the ground with a heavy thud, he was slow to get up as the man began to saunter towards him, a cocky smirk on his face.

"Well well well, I guess the legendary Knight-Spartan wasn't all he's cracked up to be," he said as he got closer to him. Licking his lips, he took a deep breath and got ready for a final blow when Jaune suddenly stood up and threw the shield on his arm into the trumpet. It wasn't as aerodynamic as Akoúo, but it did its job in knocking the Dust weapon away.

With a slash from his right arm, he cut through the man's chest plate. Reaching up with his left hand, he pulled Miló out of its scabbard on his back and slashed across the man's chest the other way, making a bloody X across his chest. A flash of his Aura failing happened just moments before Jaune thrust both blades into his gut. The man groaned out breathlessly as he gripped Jaune's hands in an attempt to stop him, but both of his blades came out through his back. His sunglasses slid down his nose to reveal his dark brown eyes. Jaune simply twisted the blades slightly and let the dead man drop to the ground in a lifeless lump.

"FLYNT!" the woman screamed out after witnessing the event. Jaune simply turned to face her as she began to skate towards him at full speed. Using a pillar to gain some height, she tried to kick him in the head, but he dodged with ease as he spun out of the way. Her attacks came at him fast and angry, tears falling down her cheeks as she tried to connect any of her hits, but only managed to get sliced and knocked down in return. Gritting her teeth, she sped around the pillars and came towards him with another jump, but Jaune was ready for her.

With no way to change her direction in mid-air, Jaune flexed his arms and threw both blades at her. All she could do was watch and wait as the blades spun end over end at her and imbedded themselves blade first into her shoulder and leg, dropping her to the ground screaming. The blond
knight began to walk towards her as she tried to crawl away.

Jaune stepped on her tail, causing her to cry out in pain as he reached down and pulled Miló out of her thigh and Crocea Mors from her shoulder. Crying out more, she stared over at the lifeless body of Flynt as she reached out to him, crying out for her partner. Lifting his blade, he plunged it into her heart from the back. She let out one last cry before her body went limp. With their specialists dead, the Atlesians began to pull back and run away in fear. Watching them go, Jaune moved to reclaim his shields and returned to his place in the centre of his chosen arena where he pulled out a large red stained rag.

Setting each weapon down on the ground, he began to clean the blood and gore off Pyrrha's weapons first, honouring her in every way he could. From behind him, he could hear a single pair of boots walk towards him slowly. Looking over his shoulder, he saw the same man who was in the jeep look around at the carnage that Jaune had wrought. The dark blond haired man shook his head and took out a pack of cigarettes and lit one up as Jaune set Pyrrha's weapons down gently once clean and began to clean his own. "Why," the man asked finally after moments of silence, "why does so much hate and pain come out from your soul?"

Jaune was silent for a time before speaking. "Because there is nothing left of my soul other than that." he said to the man as he inspected the new scratches and scars on the side of Crocea Mors’ shield. "I hope to die out here, so that I may meet her once again." Jaune snapped the shield closed and replaced the blade inside of it.

The man simply scoffed as he looked around again and gestured around again. "And what do you hope to accomplish self-righteous suicide? Hm?" he asked rather loudly.

Without looking back at him, he replaced Miló on the scabbard on his back and clipped Akoúo its place against it. "Forgiveness," Jaune answered plainly.

"What?"

"I will fight, and fight, and fight. Until I die." Jaune then turned to face the sky and closed his eyes as a light rain began to fall, cleansing his body of his enemy's blood. "Only then, can I be forgiven..."

Chapter End Notes

Hey! Horrible human being back again with another chapter. Originally, the first chapter was supposed to have Ruby kill Weiss in the end to have a more final and dramatic ending, but I left it open in case people wanted more. People wanted more, I here's more! So for the lack of a main character death in the first chapter, I made up for it with two minor (Ish) characters deaths!

I'm sorry....

I'm so sorry...

With this now becoming part of a series I'd like to see grow, updates for this one will probably come much later than people hope for, but I'll have to balance this with the sequel to my other story: Dreams of Tomorrow. (The sequel is coming! Look out for "Visions of Today" some point this week! I promise!)
That being said, I don't really know where to go next from here. So if there's someone you guys want to see in this horrible little world I've made the please tell me! I'll be more than happy to figure something out for anyone you want to see!

So if you liked my little slice of madness, please leave a kudo. I'm always looking for feedback so please feel free to comment, and as always, thank you for taking the time to read my story!
The Blood Soaked Rose Pt: II

Chapter Notes

Okay! So I might had jumped off the deep end on this one so just giving you a heads up that this chapter includes some drug abuse stuff...
So...yeah.
You're warned...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Blood Soaked Rose

Pt: II

The trip back to base was long. Between the blunt force trauma from a large chunk of rock colliding with her skull and the fact that she had seen Weiss in the middle of the battlefield, Ruby Rose was exhausted. Moving further into the core of the bombed out city while carrying her rucksack, she walked past a pair of guards in the purple and tan camouflage pattern of the Vacuo army who were standing guard inside a hollow cafe. They simply gave her one look and waved her through into the Resistance Army base in Vacuo. All around her, troops wearing the uniforms of Vacuo and Vale could be seen running around and carrying supplies to where they're needed.

The Valenese personnel who knew her gave her a wide berth as she limped towards the camps where she would most likely have a bunk. Her march was quickly paused as a young man came running towards her, waving his hand to get her attention. "Sergeant Rose!" he called out as he ran up and stopped just in front of her.

The young man was wearing a Vacuoan uniform, and had bright red hair and deep brown eyes with freckles scattered across his nose. He snapped a salute and Ruby replied with a lethargic one of her own. "The Major is waiting for you in the command room," he said quickly. Ruby sighed and nodded, she really didn't want to talk to whoever was in charge of what was left of the Vacuoan army, but she was sent out here to help support them when Atlas pushed them back into their last city.

Following the man through the base, she could see a long line for the civilian rations; people were given barely enough to survive. Thanks to the supplies that Vale was able to transport here from Mistral, their tiny rations must seem like full dinners now. She watched as a small girl in the line was given a package and quickly ran to her mother, they were both smiling as they walked down the sandy streets of Rittr. The thought of her own mother pulled her heart in a direction she didn't want to visit right now. Pulling her eyes forward, she walked past several more soldiers who were guarding the entrance to the real military base in the heart of the city.

The man walked her to a large old building, where the faint outline of "City Hall" could be seen where the letters once hung. She watched as a small girl in the line was given a package and quickly ran to her mother, they were both smiling as they walked down the sandy streets of Rittr. The thought of her own mother pulled her heart in a direction she didn't want to visit right now. Pulling her eyes forward, she walked past several more soldiers who were guarding the entrance to the real military base in the heart of the city.

The man walked her to a large old building, where the faint outline of "City Hall" could be seen where the letters once hung. Walking up the many steps into the building, she saw dozens of soldiers dressed in both Vacuo and Vale uniforms running back and forth, delivering intelligence and messages from one room to the other. Walking through the dirty halls, they arrived in the
former Mayor's office, which the Major had made into his own personal office. Walking into the large room, she noted that the walls were covered with maps of the city as well as the world, with colour coordinated pins marking the fronts of each battlefield.

In the middle of the room, behind a beautiful wood desk stood the Major. He had the typical tanned skin of someone native to the desert regions of Vacuo. He had a large black moustache that covered his mouth and a thinned patch of hair on top of his head aged him even more. Looking up at her when she walked up to his desk, he slapped the map with the palm of his hand and leaned in to look into her silver eyes. "It's about damn time that you showed up!" he shouted at her, "I've been waiting for you to come for over three weeks!"

He came around his desk and looked straight into her eyes, he was only a few inches taller than she was, so the fact that he was looking down on her made her grit her teeth. "You damn Huntsmen, you are few and far between and always running around while people are starving! Crying in the middle of a war zone over the blood of the enemy. Pathetic."

Ruby gritted her teeth at the man's horrible breath as she did her best not to cut him in half, but that was quickly becoming a losing battle. Seeing Weiss after so long brought back feelings she thought she had buried. She was a soldier now, not an emotional little girl. She had taken a small moment to shed the tears she'd been holding back, but that moment was over, now she was here and needed some privacy to correct herself. "But since I have you here, you'll be helping out." He then grinned as he returned to his desk and sat down in the fancy leather chair that somehow made it out of the bombings intact.

"I'm assigning you to 'D'-Squad, they just lost their sergeant and you'll be taking charge." He then smirked at her as he narrowed his eyes, "I may not like you Huntsmen, but I know when you're useful. And I like to keep all my problems in one place. Dismissed." He waved her off as he picked up a report and began to read through it. Turning on her heels, she made her way out of the office with a bigger headache than she entered with, but he was the man in charge, and she was just a soldier.

Making her way through the building and asking where D squad was, she was pointed to a school two blocks down from the city hall. Just a normal school, not like Signal on Patch or Beacon in Vale, a normal, average school for average, everyday children. As it turns out, the school had been converted into a makeshift barracks for the squads who were waiting for orders; the rest were set up in the surrounding buildings and tents throughout the middle of the city.

Walking up to the large tent that was set out where a playground used to be, she could see someone talking to the soldiers who were sitting around a table. Obviously, someone was upset about what was being said since one of them stood up and yelled out at the other, "This is bullshit! I'm next in charge after Dean's death! Not some hunter from the Reclamation army!"

"Sorry to hear that," The man said calmly, sounding not at all sorry, "But that's the Major's orders, live with it." The crunch of rocks under her boots alerted them to her entrance to the conversation. The man who was breaking the news wore the normal Vacuoan camouflage while the one who was yelling was wearing a tight black undershirt with the usual pants of the Vacuo army. The calm soldier had short dark hair and pale blue eyes. "Ah, speak of the devil and she will come," he said as he gestured towards her, "This is Sergeant Major Rose of the Valenese Reclamation Army, and she's now in charge after Dean's death! Not some hunter from the Reclamation army!"

Ruby looked at the soldiers who had gathered at the sign of commotion. All of them were wearing the Vacuo outfits in some form or another. Five had gathered to watch what was going on while two were still sitting at the table where the first man stood up to yell from. When she was
introduced, Ruby simply put her hand up and gave a light wave before putting it down awkwardly when everyone just stared at her. She was a soldier, not a people person anymore.

"Are you fucking kidding me?" the man said loudly in disbelief, "This girl is going to be leading us?" He gestured to her and asked, "Is this an army or the fucking prom?"

"At least we'll have a better ass to stare at now..." the other man at the table said in an uninterested tone as he looked at his cards. He had dirty blond hair cut short.

"Hey!" the woman who was sitting at the table cried out as she threw her cards at him, letting them bounce harmlessly off his bland face. She had bright pink hair that fell over the side of her head, while the other half of her head was shaved down tight to her scalp.

The first man who was yelling had black hair with a blond strip running down the left side, walking around the table to get a closer look at her. "Well, I guess I could follow you into battle," he said in a low tone; she could see his green eyes wander over her body, "As long as you follow orders... Like undress on command." His hand came up and was about to tug her red cloak off when her hand came up and grabbed his wrist; bending in quickly, he was forced to follow the movement or else his joints would break.

Crying out, he was forced to his knees with his left arm bent painfully behind him. With a heavy kick to his back, he fell face first in time for another soldier from D squad to try to attack her. She easily ducked under the punch and delivered one of her own into his kidneys, making him double over from her Aura enhanced fist. Using her speed to her advantage, she ducked and dodged attacks and countered with ease.

During the three on one fight, several other soldiers were coming in and cheering for one side or the other. The officer looked to the man who was still sitting, completely uninterested in the fight and just continuing to play cards. "You aren't joining in on this?" he asked him.

The man simply shrugged without looking. "I know who she is, I wouldn't help at all," he said as he threw a card into the pile on the table.

"Not without that attitude ya won't," the woman said as she passed a card to the man.

"I prefer sarcastic pessimism."

The brawl continued with Ruby only taking a few hits while she repeatedly landed hit after hit. She heard the audience cry out as a fourth person entered the fray wielding a large metal tube. He swung for her head and Ruby used what little remained of her Aura to reach out and grab it before it hit her. Her arm glowed in a deep scarlet as she held it still, the man stared into steel eyes with wide-eyed horror as he pulled with all his strength to reclaim his weapon, but she didn't budge. Grabbing the pole with both hands, she flipped him over her shoulder and into the table; the blond man had just enough time to calmly lift his drink before the cards and table went everywhere.

The woman jumped out of her seat and quickly joined the rest of her squad while the other man calmly got up and tossed his hand down on top of the laid out man. "I didn't have anything good anyways..." he said as he sipped his drink and watched the fight continue. The man got up from the destroyed table and ran to join the rest of the attackers standing in a loose circle around her; making it five against one. Ruby began to swing the impromptu weapon around, the hollow middle making the metal sing as she moved it around her body in twirls and circles.

Ruby remembered better days when her uncle Qrow began to teach her how to properly wield a scythe. Where she would stand for hours with a broomstick while her uncle spoke to her calmly.
"Now start swinging it around your body, like this Ruby. Just like that. Keep it up. It's okay, just pick it up and try again. If you can't even do this with a broom, how well do you think you'll do when you finish building your own scythe and you can't even do the basic movements?"

She remembered when she lost her grip on that broomstick and sent it flying through a window, while she was afraid he would yell at her, he simply laughed and ruffled her hair like he always did. "Not bad on your first try, kiddo. Keep practising and you'll be better than me one day."

"Really Uncle Qrow?" she asked him.

"One day, for sure. You're the next generation of Huntresses, Ruby. The next generation of Heroes."

Uncle Qrow's voice echoed in her mind, but a shout brought her from her happy memory to where she currently was. She wasn't a hero in a book, she was a soldier. Swinging the hollow pole around, heavy thunks echoed through the metal as she repelled attacks from three people at the same time. Its weight was much different from Crescent Rose's, but she quickly got the hang of it as she downed the three of them in quick succession.

A thrust to the guy and the first doubled over, a swing to the back of the knees and a slam into his stomach dropped the second, and a bash to the head of the third one finished the quick scuffle. Looking up, she saw the last two men look at each other, a silent agreement passed between the two of them and they took off in two different directions. She chased the first one down with ease, tripping him and making him hit his head on the waiting pole. He groaned out as he curled up, holding his head.

The last man looked back to see Ruby at least a dozen meters away, but when he looked forward, he was clotheslined by the hollow tube she was holding. Falling to the ground with the wind knocked out of his lungs, he struggled to breathe as Ruby looked down at him, rose petals floating lazily to the ground as she lifted the pole and dropped it onto him, causing him to groan out.

A cheer came up as she stormed past the people on the ground, and money was passed between the people who had taken bets during the fight. She picked up her bag and walked into the tent, her head pounding and her hands shaking. She needed the bathroom now more than ever, she needed to fix this. Walking into the tent, she saw that two rows of bunk beds lined walls of the tent, each set of beds had two lockers standing next to them.

She walked past another woman who was part of D squad; she a buzzed head, making her hair colour hard to tell. Ruby ignored her and went to the back of the tent and reached the last bunk in the row. Grabbing the rucksack that was already there, she threw it across the tent and put her own on the top bunk as she grabbed her towel and stormed back out.

"Showers," Ruby demanded; those who remained simply pointed in the direction of the school building. Making her way through the locker-lined halls, she noticed that all the scrap metal had been cleared for better uses than to keep empty lockers closed. Following the directions to the locker rooms, she saw that the woman's locker room was half destroyed and buried under rubble while the other half had rifles and crates of ammo waiting to be loaded up and used on some battlefield in the future. Walking into the men's locker room, there were a few people in there in various degrees of being dressed. She was glad to see two women in their own corner of the room, it wasn't just some cruel act of harassment on her part.

Walking up to one bench, she opened a locker and hung her towel over the door. Just as she was about to take her cloak off, she felt eyes burning holes into her. Looking over, she saw that everyone in the locker room had stopped what they were doing and were staring at her. With her
patience all dried up, Ruby quickly reached behind her back and pulled Crescent Rose off its resting place and slammed it down onto the bench, the scythe snapping open.

With that, everyone got the subtle hint that she wanted some privacy in the locker room. They all rushed out of the door and warned others who wanted the showers to not enter if they still wanted their limbs. With a heavy sigh, she began to unclip and take the cloak off her shoulders. Resting it on the locker door, she began to unlace her corset and set it on the bench with her weapon. Next was her white shirt; unbuttoning it with shaking hands, she hung it in the locker and took a deep breath as the cold metal of her dog tags touched her bare skin.

Deciding that she needed it now, she took off her belts and slipped one pouch off the leather strap before walking up to the sinks and beginning to run the water. Splashing water onto her face, she looked at herself in the mirror and sighed. She had filled out in the years since the Fall of Vale; she was taller now, almost as tall as her sister. Though her bust was nowhere near Yang's, she could still tell that it was large compared to the average. Her fair skin was marked in dozens of scars that slipped in and out of the dark black bra on her chest, mapping out every battle she had been in over the three years since the beginning of this war.

Her attention was drawn from her mostly naked body to her right arm. Inside her elbow were several large red spots with angry red veins just below the surface of her skin. With a light scratch at the area, she set the pouch on in the sink and opened it slowly.

Pulling out the handgun that was stashed in a holster inside the pouch, she set it next to the tap before getting what she was looking for; a small bottle with a milky white liquid inside of it. The Aura Stimulant was something she was using to help her through the worst days; days where she could not sleep or manage an appetite to eat very much, causing her Aura to be dangerously low. Whatever the liquid was, it gave her enough of a jump for her Aura to start up again, making her feel somewhat normal. She had more concentrated doses in another pouch, but those were for when she was in truly bad situations where her life was on the line.

She stared at the substance for a few seconds before setting it next to the handgun and taking out a syringe. Pulling it from the plastic wrapping and sticking the thin metal tube through the rubber top of the bottle, she drew a small amount into the syringe and took out a medical rubber tube that was inside the pouch. Tying it around her arm, she felt her blood get cut off as she held the band tight with her mouth. Pushing the needle into a vein, she pumped the drug in the closed-off blood vessel and pulled the needle out. Opening her mouth, the rubber tube jumped off her arm with a snap and she felt the stimulant flood her system. She closed her eyes to bask in the feeling.

Leaning against the sink, she gripped it as a groan left her lips, she could feel her Aura react to the drug and energise her slightly. Taking deep breaths, she felt the buzz in her brain as her body felt lighter. Looking up in the mirror, she did not see herself; the woman who was staring at her had a longer face, worried silver eyes and a small, disappointed look on her face. A white cloak covered her head, hiding most of her black and red-tipped hair. Summer Rose looked at her with a concerned look in her eyes. Ruby gripped the sink a bit harder as she gritted her teeth; her mother always showed up when she took a hit.

In the reflection of a window, a pond, or sometimes just standing out in the distance, she was always there, staring at her. "You have no right to judge me," Ruby said to her mother, "I'm in the war here, not you." The concerned look only deepened as her brows moved closer together, a slight tilt of her head as she waited for Ruby to break down and cry into her shoulder like she did when she was still alive... like when she tried to steal a cookie and ended up breaking the jar. "Stop staring at ME!" she shouted and drove her fist into the mirror, shattering the glass and her hallucination.
Instead of seeing herself in the mirror, her attention was drawn to the second person she was seeing. Bright amber eyes stared wide-eyed at her from behind. Taking a moment to realise that it wasn't part of her drug-induced visions, she quickly grabbed the handgun on the sink, turned around and aimed it at Blake. They stared at each other for a few moments; Blake's arms were up in a calming manner, showing she wasn't going to do anything hostile. Moving in slowly, she took a step towards Ruby and took a breath. "Don't!" Ruby blurted out. Blake simply nodded and took a step back and just looked at her. With her hands in the air, Blake looked Ruby up and down and took a deep breath.

"Ruby."

"Why are you here?" The black and red-haired woman shook her head, trying to clear her mind so she could try and anchor herself into reality.

Blake was silent for a few moments, just staring at her with her wide eyes. Ruby noticed that the bow on her head twitched lightly every few seconds while she tried to think of an answer. "I-I'm here to help you."

"Help me?" Ruby scoffed. "If you wanted to help me, you should have let me kill Weiss," she said as she lowered the handgun slowly.

"Why?" the raven-haired woman asked, shocked at her response, "She's your friend; our friend!"

"She is the enemy!" Ruby screamed as she pointed the gun back at the cat faunus. "She is trying to kill us, so I need to kill her first! That's how war works Blake!"

Blake took another step back and put her hands up again, "You can't mean that, Ruby. You cried for her, I saw you"

Ruby shook her head quickly. "I had a small moment...It's been a long day," she quickly stammered out, not wanting to look Blake in the eyes.

"I can see that..." Blake said softly. "What are you doing to yourself, Ruby?" she asked slowly. Ruby looked up and saw that her eyes were looking at her right arm, a small trickle of blood managed to escape before her aura healed the injection point.

"Aura stimulants..." Ruby said offhandedly as she lowered the pistol again, "Helps me keep my Aura up..."

Blake slowly shook her head and took a step towards her again. "You need help, Ruby..."

"I need help?" she asked, looking up at the other woman, "You know who needed help? Yang!" She could see the guilt eat at Blake's features as Ruby shook her head. "Where were you when she needed you? Huh, Blake? You were her partner! You were supposed to be with her! But you ran!" Blake looked to at the ground, her bow bending slightly as her cat ears tried to follow her emotions.

"You want to help me, Blake?" Ruby asked as she walked back to the sink and set the gun down. "Run away...just leave. That's what you're good at," she said before looking at her old teammate in the mirror. Amber eyes held tears as they stared at her. "And if you get in my way again," Ruby warned, "You will be my enemy as well." Tears slipped down Blake's cheeks as she slowly turned, her long white coat following her movements as she disappeared as suddenly as she had appeared.

With a deep, shaky breath, Ruby cleared the substance off the sink and stashed her secret back in the pouch and set it with the rest of her things before taking the rest of her clothing off. Walking
back to the mirror, she looked herself over again in the nude, her silver eyes were bloodstained and had a slight glow to the silver irises, one of the side effects of the stimulant. Walking over to the blue-tiled room with several empty shower heads, she picked the furthest one and turned on the water. The water was barely warm but it was enough to clean the blood off her skin and hair.

Feeling the tears coming, she choked back a sob and held her hands over her mouth to try and stop herself, but there was no stopping it this time. Crying into the water, she turned around and pressed her back against the cold tile and slid to the ground. Pulling her knees up to her chest, she let the water carry away her sorrow as her world closed in around her. A voice in her head berating her for making Blake run off like that, making her sad and angry, but another voice in her head calmly told that she was a soldier.

_You are a soldier._

"I am a soldier."

Chapter End Notes

And we're back!
So I'm probably going to be going through this little cycle of characters, some will have more than others while a few will be skipped. Hopefully, I've done a good job at writing what drugs are like since I have zero experience in drugs and their uses. had to google what a heroin arm looks like..

And with that said, thanks to everyone who has enjoyed the series so far, it really means a lot to me seeing the kudos and hits flood in after each chapter. And thanks to those who have subscribed and bookmarked this.

This chapter also comes with a song that helped me write it.
The Drug (part 1) by Egypt Central. They're really good.

Also, I have other stories as well, so don't hesitate to check them out!

So, if you enjoyed, a kudo goes a long way but a comment goes further! Any feedback is appreciated and thank you for taking the time to read! It really means so much to me.
In the orange glow of the evening sun, Blake Belladonna was following Ruby Rose through the remains of the city while staying hidden from her. It was fairly easy to track her, her bright red cloak was hard to miss. Leaping from rooftop to rooftop, she watched her pass the makeshift walls of the people who were stationed there. She ducked in and out of buildings as she discreetly followed her through the crowds; it was easy to sneak in and out of human armies. Most of the faunus had left the kingdoms for fear of being labelled as White Fang supporters; now living in smaller communities outside the protection of the last kingdoms, resulting in large Grimm attacks. She helped where she could when her path of hunting down Adam crossed with staying in some of these faunus towns.

She watched as Ruby entered the town hall and stayed in the shadows, her mind wandering as she waited for her to leave. Wondering what kind of woman Ruby had grown into; she saw a little of that when she tried to kill Weiss, but also saw that she cried afterwards. Obviously, Ruby was getting caught up in the flow of battle and she couldn't have known what was going on.

As the familiar red-cloaked woman left the hall, Blake followed her to the school and posted up in a building nearby; watching her as a group of people confronted her. Knowing exactly what was being said to Ruby with her enhanced hearing, she was about ready take out Gambol Shroud to take them out when the not-as-small-anymore woman began to fight them with ease. Watching her swing the metal pole around without any hesitation cemented that she wasn't the girl Blake used to know, she was a fully grown woman in the military.

After the sound beatdown, Blake followed her into the building where she slipped to the locker room, being reminded how easy it was to sneak past humans when they feel safe in their homes. Slowly rounding a set of lockers, she spied Ruby standing in front of a sink, pulling things out of a pouch. She was about to say something to Ruby when the woman pulled out a bottle and a needle. She watched as the woman put some of the substance into the syringe before wrapping a rubber tube around her arm and injecting it into her body.

Slipping out from behind the lockers, she slowly walked towards her, trying to piece together what she was witnessing. She watched as Ruby's bare shoulders tensed up for a few moments then relaxed as the drug worked its way through her system. A held breath released from her as she leaned on the sink for support. When she looked up to the mirror, she began to mumble into the reflection, Blake couldn't stop herself from shaking her head in disbelief. This was Ruby Rose, the leader of team RWBY, the small girl who got cookie crumbs all over the desk in their room and
used her books to help level her weapon for fine-tuning, and she just watched her shoot up in the bathroom.

This war did more than kill people in the name of retaliation for mass murders, it stole the innocence from someone who Blake thought was her first true friend and a member of a family who accepted her for who she was, not what she was. She jumped when Ruby screamed out and slammed her fist into the mirror, creating a spiderweb of cracks into the glass. Amber met silver in the reflection and they simply stared at each other for a few moments before Ruby quickly grabbed the handgun that was on the sink, spun around in a flurry of rose petals, and aimed straight at her face.

Staring down the muzzle of a barrel, Blake put her hands up so that she knew she had nothing in her hands, nothing to hurt her with. Ruby gently swayed, probably from the drug she just injected. Slowly, Blake took a step towards her but Ruby jerked the gun towards her. "Don't." Her words were slow and slightly slurred. With a gentle nod, Blake retracted her step and kept her hands up. After another few moments of silence, Blake slowly opened her mouth to speak.

"Ruby-"

"Why are you here?" she asked. Blake could see her bloodshot eyes behind her black and red hair. A strange silver glow crept up behind her lashes, her eyes twitching slightly as she kept the handgun trained onto Blake. She could feel her ears twitching slightly as she tried to think of something to say so she didn't get shot, at this range she wouldn't be able to summon a copy fast enough to take the hit for her. With a gentle breath, she remembered the masked woman's words and she spoke; though she did not trust her voice, slightly cracking under the tension.

"I-I'm here to help you."

The scoff that came from Ruby's throat made her flinch. "Help me? If you wanted to help me, you should have let me kill Weiss." At those words, Blake could feel her own heart start to crack and fall to pieces. Tears began to sting the back of her eyes as she began to shake her head in disbelief.

"Why? She's your friend. She's our friend!" Blake cried out.

"She is the enemy!" Ruby screamed as she pointed the gun back at the cat faunus. "She is trying to kill us, so I need to kill her first! That's how war works, Blake!"

Blake was rocked back by her outburst. "You can't mean that, Ruby. You cried for her, I saw you," her voice cracked as it grew harder and harder to hold her tears at bay.

Ruby stopped moving for a second and let her head droop slightly in thought, as if trying to remember through the haze her mind must have become. "I had a small moment," she said slowly, "It's been a long day."

"I can see that," she said as she slowly gestured to the scars and the angry red veins of track marks inside the elbow of her right arm. Obviously, she's been doing this for a long time. "What are you doing to yourself, Ruby?"

She looked down at her own arm and shrugged lightly as she lowered the pistol slowly. "Aura stimulants," she replied, "Helps keep my Aura up..."

Blake shook her head gently and took a step towards her. "You need help, Ruby"

"I need help?" Ruby snapped at her, "You know who needed help? Yang." Guilt ate at Blake's mind, the mere mention of the older sister sent images of that night of Adam cutting her arm off
with ease. "Where were you when she needed you? Huh, Blake? You were her partner! You were supposed to be with her! But you ran!" Looking down at the ground, her ears straining to follow her emotions under her bow. She was about to say something when Ruby continued, "You want to help me, Blake?" She heard the gun get set on the sink and looked up at Ruby's back. "Run away… just leave. That's what you're good at."

She couldn't hold it in now, her vision blurring as hot tears began to drip from her eyes. They locked eyes once more in the cracked mirror for Ruby's last goodbye. "And if you get in my way again. You will be my enemy as well." With that, the last strings that held her heart together snapped and it shattered in her chest. Numbly, she turned and walked away from Ruby Rose the soldier. The girl she used to know now gone.

Quickly wiping her eyes with the back of her sleeves so she could see clearly, she held her breath so she wouldn't give away her position with her sobs as she ran past the soldiers and out into the deserted part of the city under the cover of night. Running until her legs gave out, she sunk to her knees and openly cried out. Sorrow freely flowed from her eyes as she hugged herself just to have something to hold onto. She didn't know how long she cried, her mind simply playing through all the moments her and her team had in the past.

Every smile and laugh from each of their team members, her friends, her family. Her whole body shook as her tears fell down her cheeks and were soaked up by her shirt. A sudden sound broke through the cracked sobs coming from her lips. Looking up, she saw a crow had perched itself on a street sign and blinked at her while tilting its head lightly. It cawed at her again and flapped its wings lightly before jumping down and began to fly down the street, stopping at the next sign and waiting for her.

Such an off feeling seemed to be coming from the bird. Blake slowly got to her feet and wiped the tears from her face. Slowly, she began to walk after it and when she got close enough, it flew down the street and waited for her again. This happened several more times before it dove into an alleyway. When Blake turned down the tight corridor, she lost sight of it around a corner.

Running to make sure it didn't get too far ahead, she turned the corner and skidded to a stop at the sight of a man sitting on top of a forgotten dumpster. His black hair had a few streaks of grey in it, a rough stubble graced his angled face. Deep crimson eyes stared at her as he looked like he had been waiting for her. Reaching into his pocket, Blake reached up for her weapon and both drew at the same time. Her weapon coming out to block a-

-flask. He raised his eyebrow at her as he uncapped it, downed a long sip of it, and took a deep breath. They stared at each other in silence for a few moments before he finally spoke. "How is she?" he asked, his voice a rough whisper that she didn't know how to answer properly. He knew that she had talked to Ruby, how was not a question that popped into her mind at the moment. Clearing her throat, she lowered her weapon and took a deep breath.

"Not good," she began, choking back the threat of tears once again, "She’s shooting up something. She called it Aura stimulant." He sighed heavily and shook his head, his free hand coming up and cupping his face as his shoulders sagged in defeat. "What happened to her?" Blake asked as she took a step forward slowly.

"You know when they say war is hell?" he asked as he looked up at her, his eyes angry at everything around him, but mostly himself. "They are so wrong because at least in hell, the innocent are spared..." He then downed another mouthful of the drink in the flask before putting it away. They were silent for a few more moments before he spoke once more. "Right. Let's get this show on the road," he said as he jumped off the dumpster and dusted his backside off, "For
whatever reason, Ozpin thinks that you're the one who can bring you girls back together, so let's get started." He began to walk down the alley. Blake shook her head quickly and ran to catch up to him.

"Wait, Ozpin is alive?" Blake asked as she walked next to him. The man simply nodded simply as he pointed out in a direction.

"Yeah, and he's a pain in the ass," he said simply, "Listen, Ozpin has a plan to save this world, and it all falls on the shoulders of team RWBY."

"Not really much of a team anymore," she whimpered slightly, "Ruby is an addict, Weiss is a soldier and Yang is missing her arm." Blake sighed deeply and shook her head.

"Well then, you'd better hurry," he said as he snapped his fingers in front of her face in order to get her attention. "In two days, there will be a ship leaving for Atlas, you need to make sure you're on it," he told her as he folded his arms over his chest, "Once you're there, we'll come find you and let you know the next part of the plan to get RWBY back together."

Blake shook her head in disbelief. "How can you be sure that this will work, that I can somehow fix everything?" she asked as she walked out in front of him and stared into his eyes.

"I'm not," was his terse reply, "but we have no other options. Get to Atlas." He then turned and began to walk down the street, waving his hand in a two finger salute before putting his hands in his pockets and walking back down the alleyway. She shook her head and went to get more answers from him but when she looked down the alleyway, he was gone. Only the bird she that was following stayed was there for a second before flying off into the night air. She stood still for a few seconds and quickly wiped the last of her tears off her face as she looked back at the direction he pointed in. Steeling her will and shouldering her weapon, she began to make her way to where the airship would be to take her to Atlas.

As it turned out, the ship was in an Atlesian camp on the coast, just south of the main city of Vacuo. Sneaking in was easy enough, more humans that only expect to hear other humans sneaking around their camp. She wasn't sure which bullhead she was supposed to take so she waited as the sun rose over the camp. Hiding behind a couple of crates, she jumped when a loud buzzer attacked her sensitive ears and saw the camp coming to life shortly afterwards. Soon after that, she heard the name of Schnee echo through the camp.

A few minutes later, she watched Weiss Schnee walk up to one of the waiting ships and stop to watch the bodies of dead soldiers get loaded onto another one. When she got on, Blake quickly made her way into the undercarriage of the ship, she found a small corner to hide herself in and took a deep breath. When the ship began to fly off, she wrapped her coat around herself a little tighter, knowing that it was going to be a cold couple of hours in the air.

Her restless sleep was interrupted by the bullhead suddenly landing. Straightening up, she waited an hour for everyone to get off before slipping out from her hiding hole, slipping to the ground without a sound. She quickly raced to cover and breathed in the frigid air of Atlas, even in the summertime, Atlas was cold. Though the ground was clear of any snow, little puffs came out from her mouth with every breath she took.

Easily cutting through a chain link fence that brought her into the main city, she began to walk around slowly, hands in her pockets while trying as look as inconspicuous as possible. She found a
hotel with fairly low prices for rooms, since she had no idea how long she was going to be waiting here for that man, whoever he was.

It was the following day when she was awoken by a series of taps on the window. Instantly awake, she slipped Gambol Shroud from under her pillow and looked over to see a crow tapping at the glass repeatedly with a piece of paper in his mouth. Getting out of the bed, she opened the window and the bird jumped onto the desk in front of it. It cawed and the paper landed softly on the cheap wooden desk. Before she could do anything else, it flew back out the window into the chilly air. Quickly closing the window in order to stop the shivering, she unfolded the paper and quickly read it.

_Sterling Street South_

_Hephaestus Building 155903_

_Basement 2_

_Vault 225-B_

_Username: Beniamino Ilmar_

_Password: 20F-CH82_

Without thinking too much about it, she collected her jacket and quickly walked out of the hotel clutching the piece of paper. Whatever was there, if it was going to help her get her family back she didn't care what it was, as long as it fixed everything.

Sterling Street was in the industrial district in Atlas. She stuck to the shadows of the tall buildings and avoided any of the busier streets. Reaching the building, she broke the lock on the back door and quickly entered, avoiding any camera she saw. Making her way to an elevator that didn't have a camera on it, she slipped inside and jumped up through the access door on top and climbed the steel bars down to basement level two.

Upon prying the doors open, she was met by bright fluorescent lights and perfect white floors and walls. Silently moving down the corridors, she remained in the blind spot of more cameras and people wearing white lab coats. Managing to make it to the reception desk, she took count of how many people were standing around when a bright green sign plastered on the wall behind the receptionist caught her eyes. " _Polendina Robotics _" 

Somewhere deep down, she knew that name, but she ignored that thought and continued onward on her mission to find the vault she was supposed to break into. Following a conveniently painted line labelled "vaults", she quickly and silently made her way down the corridor. No one was coming behind her and she didn't see anyone ahead of her. Anything to get there faster, she began to pick up the pace of her walking, turning it into a quick sprint down the hall.

This proved to be a mistake as an Atlesian Knight appeared in front of her, coming down an unseen hallway. Unable to get out of the way fast enough, Blake unsheathed her weapon and jumped over the robot, cutting off its head before landing on the other side of it and sprinting again before it hit the ground.

Entering the vault room, she walked up to a console that was sitting in front of a massive wall of steel crates with a large robotic arm in front of it. Looking down at the screen, she pulled out the paper and double checked which she was supposed to get. Punching the vault number into the command, it asked for a username and password, which she quickly punched in.
After a few seconds, a green bar with the words "Approved" crossed the screen and the large arm began to move from side to side until it found the box she asked for. Nervously tapping her foot, she waiting for the box to be placed on the table next to her and the arm moved away, waiting for the next vault to be called forth. Making her way to the table, she opened the box and felt her heart seize in her chest at the sight of it.

Letting the top fall to the table, she let her eyes trail along a large, metal right arm. Sitting perfectly on small stands, the silver steel shone as black carbon fibre fleshed it out. Inside the crate was a few bits of other parts as well as a journal and a large briefcase. Pulling the case out and opening it, there were places inside foam for everything in the crate.

This right arm was exactly what she needed for Yang. This is what she would use to plead for her forgiveness, this was going to fix everything between them. It was her fault that she lost her arm in the first place, it was her responsibility to replace it, right? Quickly shoving the arm and components into their places in the case, she closed it and carried it out. Gambol Shroud in her hand, she began to walk out of the vault room at a determined pace. The faster she leaves Atlas, the faster Yang will forgive her.

Just as she turned a corner, Blake stopped and stared into the ice blue eyes of Weiss Schnee. Myrtenaster already in her hand. Wearing the blue skirt and white Atlas breastplate she saw back in Vacuo. They stared into each other's eyes for a brief moment. Weiss opened her mouth to say something, but Blake knew what she was about to say. The cat faunus managed to get into a military state, broke into an Atlesian robotics facility, stole Atlas technology and was about to leave with it.

Weiss was an Atlesian Specialist, of course she was going to stop her, it was her job; but nothing was going to stop her from getting his arm to Yang. Nothing was going to stop her from from meeting the blonde woman who haunted her dreams since that day and begging for forgiveness while presenting this arm to her; and maybe confronting her true feelings after everything was said and done.

So before Specialist Schnee said anything, Blake raised her pistol and aimed it at her.

Chapter End Notes

Terrible Human being here again with everyone's favourite angst filled kill fest.

Now, your all probably wondering where Jaune's chapter was. Well sorry to say that I spent a very long time trying to figure out something for him and I just couldn't. So I'm really sorry for anyone waiting for him, but I'm mostly going to be concentrating on the members of RWBY. I'll add in different chapters centred around other people here and there so keep an eye out for them!

15 internet points for someone who finds the ToG reference.

Thank you for taking the time to read. If you enjoyed it, leave a Kudo, if you already have, log out and read again as a guest and leave another. (I won't tell) Any comments always make me smile and feed back is always welcome!

Also plugging in my other series, go check them out! Hopefully you like them just as much as this one. Its kinda hard to juggle them all but I'm doing my best to update
them all around in a circle.
"Get up!"

The voice scratched at the back of Yang's skull as she shot her eyes open and sat up with a start. Both of these actions caused her brain to try and attack her in the form of the worst headache she had ever felt in her life. Closing her eyes again, she let out a groan and tried to shield herself from the sun that was coming in from somewhere across from her. Someone kicked her foot hard, she lowered her hand to glower at whoever had disturbed her drunken sleep. The last person who did that didn't have a very good morning, and the clinic was very busy for the next few hours. Squinting her eyes as she got used to the light, she saw Emerald standing over her.

Her hands on her hips with a pissed off look on her face, her red eyes narrowed in anger as she lightly tapped her finger against her waist. Her mouth in a hard line as she waited for the blonde to come back to reality. Why was she here? where was she? how much had she drank to end up here? Looking around, she saw that she was sitting in a very uncomfortable seat in a bullhead. The door across from her was open, letting in the morning sun that attacked her lilac eyes. Memories of what happened last night flooded her already overloaded brain.

Another kick from the mint haired woman brought her focus back to her. "I'm up. I'm up!" Yang coughed out as she sat up and swallowed drily, it felt like she had eaten an entire field of cotton. With a deep sigh, she looked around a bit more and saw Neo walking back from the cockpit and stretched her arms above her small form with a silent yawn coming from her mouth. Yang looked out the door and saw a vast green forest ahead of them, with one more prod with a foot, Yang got out of her seat and stumbled to a standing position while using her one good arm to steady herself against the hull.

"Come on, we need to get going if we're going to put enough distance between us and Mercury when they track down the bullhead" Yang simply nodded when a bottle of water was produced before her, following the arm, she saw Neo with her bright, two coloured eyes. With a small nod, she took the bottle of water, already opened, and downed half of it in just a few mouthfuls.

Emerald and Neo each grabbed a tanned coloured bag filled with, what Yang assumed, was emergency supplies in case the ship fell out of the sky for whatever reason. Emerald walked down the short set of stairs first, Yang followed when suddenly something latched onto her back.
Reaching up, her anger flaring as red seeped into her eyes, she went to throw whoever decided they wanted to piggy back onto her.

A pair of silver eyes met with her crimson eyes and suddenly, her rage dissipated as quickly as it boiled. She blinked a few times, red turning violet as silver became brown and pink. Had she imagined it? Maybe, Yang knew one thing for sure, she needed a drink. "Do you mind?" Yang asked as she tried to knock the smaller woman off of her. The only response she got was her legs wrapping around her waist and her arms around her neck.

Using her only hand, she tried to pry the legs off her waist when Emerald called out to them. Apparently she had continued to walk forward without looking back for a few metres. "You might as well let her up there" She said simply. "She's the one who flew all night to get us here without sleep. I took a nap and you slept the entire way. The least you can do" With a defeated sigh, Yang rubbed her head and ran a hand through her hair. Too hungover to argue anymore, she jostled the smaller one on her back into a more comfortable position and followed Emerald further into the green forest, away from their escape vehicle.

As they walked, Yang didn't recognise the forest they were travelling through. They were too far south to still be in the Emerald Forest as far as she could tell, and the eternal red of the Forever Fall forest was missing. All around them were pine trees and deep leafy green that only came from the middle of summer. Walking past trees as thick as buildings and over roots that needed to be climbed over, down paths that laid forgotten for decades, Yang's mind began to wonder.

Neo wasn't heavy at all, her weight on her back brought back a faint familiarity of when she would give Ruby piggy back rides when they were just kids. Days of simper times, happy times, times where loved ones were still alive and family smiled at each other.

"Giddy up, Yang!" Ruby cried out in laughter. Her heels kicking into her gut, but she didn't mind. Her small hands gripped her hair and pulled painfully, but she didn't care. Ruby Rose was laughing, she was smiling, for the first time in a long time. Not since Summer died. Not since mommy never came home. With a bounce and a laugh, Yang pushed those dark thoughts from her mind and concentrated on her little sister on her back. She braced for a second and quickly sprints as quickly as she could down the dirt path behind their house. Ruby squealed in laughter as she pulled closer to her older sister, holding on for dear life.

She held her legs tight against her sides as they bounced and ran past the trees behind their home, just to forget how empty and cold it became. How distant and secluded their father had become. Only to come out for another green bottle from the locked door under the sink. They continued to run and laugh and forget. She ran until she couldn't breath anymore, stopped to catch her breath, she took in deep gasps of air as she tried to get started again. It was when she finally caught her breath when she noticed that the laughter stopped.

She looked up over she shoulder and saw Ruby staring off out to the side. Following her silver eyes, Yang saw the gravestone of their mother, Summer Rose. She could feel the weight of the sorrow coming off of her sister. The two of them stared at the gravestone in silence, she remembered when they came out here for the funeral. Where they put the stone into the ground and talked about how great of a mother Summer Rose was, one of the bravest Huntresses to ever graduate from Beacon and how she saved countless lives.

There was no body to bury here, all that stood to remember her by was a simple slab of rock with her name on it, a set of words and her emblem carved into it. Ruby held onto her a little tighter, her voice small and tired. "Mommy isn't coming home, is she..." Yang shook her head gently.

"No, Ruby." Yang said gently. "She's gone. For good"
"I miss Mommy, Yang." Ruby cried lightly. She had cried for a long time that night and the nights that followed. "I miss her cookies, I miss her smile, I miss the way she tucked me in at night and the bedtime stories and movie nights and pizza nights and when she would come home from a mission how we would all go out for icecream..." Her voice trailed higher the more she continued before breaking down and crying altogether. Ruby cried into her shoulder, Yang had stopped crying for her, after finding out about her real mother, that Summer never gave birth to her. It still didn't change the fact that she raised her as her own.

"I know, Rubes. I know" Yang said gently. "I miss her too" They stared off at the gravestone, the sun slowly setting behind it. When it finally faded behind the trees, Yang took a deep breath felt Ruby shaking slightly.

"Yang?"

"Yeah?"

"I'm hungry"

Yang smiled lightly, she brought Ruby higher on her back so it was more comfortable for her before turning away from the grave and walking back towards their home. "Let's go get dinner started" Ruby nodded against her golden hair and held her tighter if a little tired.

"Maybe daddy will join us?" Ruby asked as they walked.

"Maybe..."

"Yang?" Ruby asked again.

"Yeah?"

"Yang"

"What?"

"Yang!"

Yang snapped out of her memory and looked around her. Emerald was standing in front of her, staring at her with crimson eyes. They were standing on a large, flat rock over top of a lake that began at a waterfall nearby and continued down a river across from it. Neo was still on her back, but began to wiggle out of her grasp so she could stand on her own. Yang released her without a fight and she came to stand next to her, looking up at her with a raised eyebrow, the colours of her eyes changed sides from the last time she saw them. Emerald snapped her fingers to get her attention, much to her annoyance. "Hey, go get cleaned up, and we'll make camp here for the night"

Yang looked at her and then looked over the body of water before her. She shrugged lightly as she turned her gaze towards the dark skinned woman. "Why bother?"

Obviously, that was the wrong answer. "Because you look like a horror movie and smell like a house party" Emerald sighed as she pinched the bridge of her nose. That sighed brought Weiss Schnee to mind. How she would always do that same gesture whenever Yang would make a bad joke or pun, or when Ruby would eat way too many cookies for her liking. Yang simply rolled her eyes and let out another sigh.

"I could honestly care less what you think" Again, the wrong answer.
Emerald lunged forward and planted both hands on her shoulders and gave a hard push into her, sending the blonde flying backwards into the water. She felt the water rush around her as the crystal blue enveloped her wholly. Shen her body floated back to the surface, she came up and shook her head violently, trying to get her massive golden mane out of her face so she could breath and tread water.

Looking up, she saw Neo push Emerald with an angry look on her face. "What. I'm not babysitting anyone" She said simply as she walked away from the outcropping rock. "We're here to do a job, and that's what I'm doing" Neo simply shook her head and looked down at Yang, she could swear she saw compassion in her eyes for the brawler. With a heavy sigh, Yang began to swim towards the shallow parts so she could actually wash herself.

Sitting down, the cold water came up to her chin, her one hand moving up to try and wash the dried blood and bits of brain out of her hair. She could see the smoky wisps of blood coming off of her skin and some out of her orange tank top and grey pants. Her Jacket heavy soaked all the way through, the knot in her right sleeve a reminder of the last thing he did for her.

There was a second pair of hands on her shoulders suddenly, Yang looked back with a light jump and saw Neo standing behind her. Her jacket discarded and her boots sitting in the sand nearby, pants rolled up to her knees. Grabbing her shoulders, the shorter girl helped peel the jacket off her shoulders and quickly ran it back to shore. She hung it up on a tree branch that was sitting near a fire pit that Emerald was in the middle of making. She then ran back to the water and waited for Yang.

She was busy staring into the water when two finger snaps took her attention once again. She figured that is how the smaller woman got others attention. Looking up at her, she gently tugged at her own shirt to signify what she was trying to get at. Yang simply shook her head and reached under the water and pulled her top off with one hand and held it up to her. "Here...knock yourself out" Yang said deadpan as Neo took the shirt and hung it up with her jacket to dry out. Sitting in the water with her sports bra, one of the few she owned that she could get on with only one hand.

The next time Neo walked back into the water, Yang already slipped her grey pants off and held them up. Being left alone once more, Yang went back to the lengthy task of washing her hair of all the blood it had accumulated last night. Again, Neo came back to her and began to run her hands through her hair, helping her. With her at having the better angle, Yang left Neo to do most of the work.

After a while, Yang spoke finally. "Why are you doing this?" She asked. "Last time I checked, you almost killed me, and tried to kill my sister" Neo offered her a small shrug as she rubbed her thumb against her middle finger and index. A sign that meant money, like in an old show with gangsters, that meant that she was getting paid. She wasn't sure which side of it was, but whatever it was, money was involved. After a while, Yang had enough of sitting in cold water in her underwear. She stood up and looked over at Neo and sighed deeply.

"Thanks...I guess" Neo offered her a kind smile, the same kind she would often give Blake when they were alone or if no one was looking. Just thinking of the black haired faunus spoiled what little good mood she had generated from washing her hair. With a frown, she stomped towards the fire, kicking her shoes off and peeling off her soaked socks and tossed them near the fire that Emerald had started.

"Cold water?" She asked with a raised eyebrow and a smirk. Following her eyes, she could see her nipples bleeding through her top. Even with her semblance making her as warm as a heater on full blast without thought, but even coming out of a cold water into a brisk breeze forced a chill through
her body. Frustration coursed through her veins as her arm came up and covered her large chest.

"Whatever..." Yang said softly as she rubbed her head. Her headache pounding through her skull. "Got anything to drink?" She asked with closed eyes. She opened them in time to see Emerald toss a bottle at her. Catching it in her hand, she looked it over and shook her head. "I was thinking something harder than water..."

"We didn't pack any whiskey, you were drunk enough as it was, didn't think you needed any more" She said simply as she reached into the bag and pulled out a few packets of rations and handed two to Neo, who squeezed the middle of it and shook it to start the process of heating it up to eat before handing one to Yang. Military rations at its finest.

"I could really go for a drink..." Yang said simply as leaned forward and placed her elbow on her knee and held her throbbing head in her hand.

"Sucks to be you." The dark skinned woman said simply as she shook her packet a bit to spread the heat. "But if you're that desperate, you can suck on the alcohol wipes in the first aid kit" She offered. "I'm pretty sure they're like, ninety-five percent"

"You're a bitch" Yang mumbled out from behind her hand.

"I've always been a bitch." She said simply, gesturing to herself. "What about you? I don't remember a day without resisting the need to punch that shit-eating smirk off your stupid face. And now you just don't care. The hell happened to you?"

Yang was silent for a couple of moments before speaking, trying to piece together a coherent answer. "Sometimes, bad things just happen" Emerald was silent for a few seconds, just staring down at her food.

"Yeah..."

With a sigh, Yang picked up her packet and gripped the top of the tear-tap with her teeth and pulled on it, Getting a face full of steam. She opened it up slightly and peered inside, red tomato paste and mushed pasta and chunks of dry brown meat. Spaghetti and meatballs maybe? She had her fill of these rations during their mission at Mountain Glenn, and wasn't particularly looking forward to this one either. Pushing her fingers inside the package, she fished out the small white packet containing the combination of Dust and chemicals that, when smashed together, became extremely hot and cooked the ration from inside.

Tossing the chemical packet into the fire without a care, she licked her fingers clean of paste and decided that the burnt wood and ash in the fire pit would probably taste better. Just as she was about to reach for the spork that came taped to the side, another utensil already shoved itself inside of her package, scooped some of the 'food' onto it and was presented to her mouth. Looking up, Yang saw Neo holding it. "Why are you doing this? Why is she doing this?" Yang asked looking from Neo to Emerald.

Emerald shrugged simply as she grimaced from her mouthful of whatever she had the misfortune of getting in her meal. "She likes you" Neo smiled brightly and nodded her head as she tried to feed Yang again. Yang lightly slapped her hand away from her mouth with a frown.

"I can feed myself" Yang snapped and Neo pouted as she ate the spork full herself. "And what do you mean she likes me?" She asked as she turned her attention back to the other woman. Emerald just shrugged at that question.
"She likes you, what else can I say?"

"She tried to kill me!" At that, Neo shook her head and began to touch parts of her body as a way of communicating. Yang just sighed deeply and shook her head. "What?" The smaller woman just rolled her eyes and reached over to her jacket where she fished out a scroll that matched her colour scheme. She opened it with a flick of her wrist and began to flick her thumb over the letters with mastery. Flipping the device over, Yang read what was written.

"I wasn't going to kill you on that train"

"I doubt that." She said simply as Yang positioned the ration package between her knees and forced the spork into it to try and eat.

"I was just going to give you something to remember me by ;)"

"Why?"

"Because I liked our fight, and I like you"

Yang sighed and shook her head. "Joy..." She groaned lightly as she tried to keep the food in her stomach, as revolting as it was and how much she needed a drink it was a losing battle. They are their terrible food in silence, the only noise coming from their stifled gags and the crackling of the fire pit as twilight descended upon the forest. She was about to way something when the sounds of tree branches snapping echoed and everyone looked over to see a man in grey metal armour, burnt orange hair and cold, blue eyes.

Coming into the clearing, several soldiers wearing bright red and black camouflage uniforms and automatic rifles. One of them was carrying a large black and grey launcher with a large green spear tip. Yang looked up at her former classmate at beacon and shook her head lightly in disbelief. "Cardin?"

Cardin Winchester looked over the three of them and let out a laugh as he shouldered his massive mace and grinned at her. "Well well well. Look who it is" He said as he confidently strode out before them, ten soldiers standing at the ready. "Yang Xiao Long. In all of her glory" He said as his eyes wondered her body. She was then fully aware she was sitting in nothing but a grey sports bra and matching shorts, the rest of her clothing still drying by the fire. "Well...most of it..." He said as she felt his eyes linger on the stump of her arm. Her teeth grit slightly as anger pulsed through her veins, same pulse as her headache.

"What do you want, Cardin..." She asked as she forked a chunk of meat and shoved it into her mouth.

"Well, I was going to scout the forest, but I think I found something a little more interesting." He said simply while looking at the ground. "Speaking of Atlas..." He began as he stood behind her. If looks could kill, Cardin would have been set on fire by her glare alone. Emerald had set her meal down and went to grab her weapon when three soldiers aimed their rifles at her head. "Wasn't that Schnee bitch Atlsian?" This got the other soldier's attention as the sounds of safety switches clicking off echoed through the air. "Whats to say you're not working with her?"
Again, Yang scoffed as she looked over her shoulder at her. "She left me. Same as the rest of them..." She said that last part quietly as the soldiers surrounded them.

"Well, let's not take that chance..." He gave a dark chuckle, the rest of his men followed suit as handcuffs were produced and the men continued to walk towards them. "We'll interrogate them, and know for sure" Yang really didn't like the way he said that. Neo got up to her feet and Emerald followed suit. When Yang refused, Cardin reached down and gripped her hair. That would be his downfall.

She jumped to her feet and landed a bare fist to his plated chest, sending him stumbling back with a grunt. Her eyes aflame as she bared her teeth at him. Emerald fired out a few shots with deft hands and Neo charged for her umbrella and yanked out her blade. In seconds, half of the soldiers were cut down or shot. The rest quickly ran to the trees for cover as Cardin recovered quickly and slammed into her with his mace, sending her over a bolder and falling hard onto the ground on the other side.

"Dammit!" Emerald shouted as she fired into the trees to keep the rest at bay. "We need her to snap out of it!" Neo used one hand and two fingers to point to her own eyes before pointing at where Yang landed. "I can't! I won't make another monster" Neo then pointed to her eyes again and dragged a thumb across her own throat. Emerald gritted her teeth as one more fell to the ground, bleeding from his neck. "I don't even know what to use!"

With that, Neo produced a folded piece of paper and handed it to her. Emerald opened it and gazed at it. Shaking her dead, the red eyed woman looked to her smaller partner. "You'd better catch her when she falls" Neo just nodded and slammed her sword back into her umbrella shaft.

Yang landed to the ground with a hard thump. The wind knocked out of her, and left her gasping for air. Looking up at the green trees, she could hear Cardin's heavy armour clanking as he made his way to her. Best case scenario he would kill her, worst case, he'd rape her first. Not a pleasing thought, but at least her life would be over, no more pain of missing people who will never return. She slowly sat up and felt the rock on her back and waited for Cardin to do his worst.

"Yang?" Looking up, the blonde woman saw someone impossible standing before her. A man long dead that could not be here. Taiyang Xiao Long quickly kneeled before her, his hand gently cupping her face and a sad smile crept across his lips. Tears welled in her eyes and slipped down her cheeks. "Daddy?" His smile grew a little bit wider as he reached down and took her left arm in his and gently slipped Ember Celica back into her wrist. "Do not go gentle into this quiet night" He whispered to her. He let his voice sooth any worry in her mind, her muscles relaxed and she felt like she could breath for the first time in years.

"Rage," He said to her. "Rage against the dying light" He helped her stand to her feet and gently cupped her face, she leaned into his gentle hand and closed her eyes.

"Ready, bitch?" Cardin asked behind her. When Yang opened her eyes, her father was gone. A sudden hit from behind made her stumble slightly, it felt like when pressure built up in her spine, and when she stretched, it gave a satisfying pop. Her semblance flowed blissfully through her veins, igniting her eyes and casting flames through her beautiful golden hair. She turned around and saw Cardin's eyes widen in fear. With a jerk of her wrist, her weapon came to life. Jumping at him, she landed a heavy hit against his chest, crumpling his armour and sending him flying into another, she charged at him with a scream, he pushed someone in front of her fist.

Where an Aura trained person's jaw would have been broken, the un-Aura'd man's head simply disappeared in a cloud of bloody mist. Cardin chased after one of the last soldiers under his command, yanked the rocket propelled explosive and aimed it straight at her and fired. The green
spear tip flew towards her, and Yang threw her fist out and it exploded around her body. Taking this as his chance, Cardin charged her with a yell and swung with all his strength down on her head. When it connected, her Aura flared brightly and his weapon shattered.

Looking up at him with red eyes, her hand reached with the speed of a King Taijitu and her fingers wrapped around his neck and lifted him into the air. Pushing him against a tree, his feet kicked and his arms scratched at her arm as she began to choke him with one hand.

Struggling against her, his nails scratched against her Aura, not even leaving scratch marks on her skin. His kicks only strengthened the hold on his neck as she stared into his horror filled eyes as life was squeezed out of his chest. With one muscle spasm, his neck snapped, and his body went limp. No, this was too easy. She needed more, more destruction, more killing, more...anything.

Tossing his lifeless body aside like a rag doll, she let out a bellowing cry of anguish as she tried to search for anything to quench her blood thirst. She watched as the last remaining soldiers sprinted back into the woods, she tensed her body up to chase after them when another familiar voice caught her off guard.

"Yang!" Spinning her head back, her hair following, she saw Ruby Rose standing before her. Her younger sister's silver eyes filled with concern. She looked the same as the day she left, black and red shirt, skirt and cape.

"Ruby?" Yang said out loud, her fury dissipating by the second. Her hair settled against her back, just past her hips, dry from activating her full semblance for the first time in years.

"It's over Yang," Ruby said softly as she slowly walked towards her older sister. "Its okay...its okay..." Yang's eyes faded back to her usual muted violet as she accepted Ruby's hug. "You're okay" She whispered into her chest.

"You came back..." Yang said gently as she pulled Ruby closer. A cry of pain took her attention from her sister and to Emerald, who was holding her head in pain. Looking back down at Ruby, excited to have her sister back, only to find that her usual black hair with red tips were gone, replaced by brown and pink with white streaks. Neo looked up at her and held her closer, silver replaced with brown and pink, her usual scheme.

Yang's breath caught in her throat as she tried to pull away, but Neo held her close, shaking her head to stop her from leaving. "You did this?" Yang asked looking up at Emerald. "You made Neo into Ruby?" Anger began to seep into her voice and veins. "And my dad? You made her into my dad too?!" It made sense, his voice was wrong, his touch was wrong. Everything about him except for what he looked like was wrong.

"Thats what I do," Emerald said with a flop of her arms. "I make people see what I want them to see..." She gestured to her face.

"How did you even know what my dad looked like?"

Emerald hesitantly walked towards her, in her outstretched hand, was a photograph that was folded several times and was opened. Taking it in her hand, she looked at it and felt tears falling from her face once more. The picture was the one her, Ruby and Taiyang took when they both were accepted into Beacon academy. Her breaths were coming in short and hard. "You stole this from my house?!" She shouted and tried to grab at the woman, Neo held her closer and stopped her.

"You!...You!..." She couldn't find any words to express the pure fury that was growing inside of her. She felt a squeeze around her torso from Neo, looking down at the girl, Yang felt her anger
start to fade from inside of her from the touch of another. With another sigh, Yang let her arm go limp and rubbed the tears from her eyes. "So it was you who made me hit mercury during the fight?" Emerald nodded while looking at the ground. Yang grit her teeth again and shook her head. "Anyone else you fucked with?" She asked loudly.

Emerald looked down again and sighed. "One other person..." She began. "After that, I couldn't work for Cinder anymore. It was just too much" She felt Neo nod against her chest, a heavy sigh escaped her tiny lips. "I thought she was going to change this world for the better. But she just wanted it to burn" Yang looked down at Neo and gently tapped her shoulder, reluctantly Neo pulled away from the larger Yang and stood nearby.

"Who was it?" Yang asked finally. Emerald gave out a sigh and shook her head. With a deep breath, she began to walk to the fire with Yang and Neo in tow. Emerald took her seat again by the fire and closed her eyes for a long moment, trying to collect her thoughts before speaking.

When she finally did, she told her story, and how she birthed the Knight-Spartan.

Chapter End Notes

No one liked Cardin Winchester anyways, right? Right?

Any who. He's the next chapter, uploaded late. Again. Cause I can't keep an update schedule to save my life, apparently. Not really sure what to say. I just hope I got Emerald and Neo down correctly so people don't get mad...

If you enjoyed it, please leave a Kudo! It really means a lot to me when I get that email saying people left a Kudo, makes work go by a little easier. Comments make me smile as well! Feedback is always welcome and thank you for taking the time to read me piece of insanity!

And please! Read some of my other works, I'm sure you'll enjoy them just as much as I enjoy writing them!

Also! If someone knows how to make the font into that cool little computer boxy font, let me know, I'd like to use that for Neo's conversations in the future.
Weiss Schnee walks to the middle of the stage, walking into the brilliant and perfect circle of the spotlight, her heels echoing through the hall, her very presence silencing any and all conversations the audience were having while waiting for her performance to start. She was perfection, her white top with a red lined, white jacket pure and crisp and her white skirt was tinted blue the further it got to the bottom, her snow white hair was tied into an off-centre ponytail to the right, her only form of rebellion that her father tolerated. She looked out past the stage as she took her perfect posture, her back straight, chin up and took a deep breath. With the spotlight in her eyes, she couldn't see the audience in the rows and rows in front of her. Each of them were an important members of the higher class of Atlas, each of them paying a small fortune to simply be in her presence and listen to her sing. She needed to be perfect for them, He needed her to be perfect for them. Soon, the overture began to play, a simple pattern on the piano. Its ivory keys creating a haunting echo through the hall. With one more deep breath, she opened her mouth, and her voice came through. Like a breeze over a frozen tundra. Crisp, clear and unrestrained.

"Mirror, tell me something,
Tell me who's the loneliest of all?"

The music sped up, string instruments joined in with the light percussion of drums as a hint of electronic blended together to create give a boring opera a much-needed splash of modern tastes. Her body gently moved and swayed with the music, she closed her eyes as a beat that she had already memorised taking over her as felt the music surge through every blood vessel in her body. The cadence slowed down as her part came up once more, she opened her mouth, and let her voice carry over the sounds of the song.

"Mirror, Tell me something, 
Tell me who's the loneliest of all?
Fear of what's inside of me; 
Tell me, can a heart be turned to stone?"

The beat sped up again as the pianist masterfully danced his fingers across the keys in fluid motions that only came from years of painful practice, a torture she is all too familiar with. How many hours did she spend with dozens of teachers. How much lien did her father spend on them and their lessons, hundreds? Thousands? The cost of perfection can be a great, but the price of
perfection for a Schnee was insurmountable. The music came to a lull, she took a deep breath and readied herself for the hardest part of this song. Her voice called out like a siren call, a cry for help, a cry for love. She held her note to exactly when it needed to go, and stopped exactly when it needed to stop. Not a second later, that would not be perfect.

She opened her eyes, the spotlight was gone. The harsh artificial light was replaced with the soft glow of the sun, she followed the beam of light up to see a large hole in her concert hall ceiling. Looking back to the audience, nothing remained but skeletons. Hundreds of seats filled with nothing but bones, but the music continued on, echoing through the hall. Three figures began to walk towards her, each of them taking a different set of stairs down. To her left, the pale white eyes of Fox Alistair stared at her, lacking any pupils. His burnt red hair bright against his dark skin. A dark red sleeveless shirt and black pants with his gauntlets already had their blades extended up to his elbows finished his outfit.

To her right, the massive, muscular form of Yatsuhashi Daichi came into her sight. His massive two handed sword pointed at her, his left shoulder covered in scared, the green metal that covered that half of his chest. His black hair tightly cut to his head and his black, piercing eyes stared her down from the tip of his blade. His long green robe wrapped around his legs as his dark brown pants ended in large, metal plated boots.

Finally, walking down the centre stairs, Coco Adel strutted down the set of stairs like it was her own personal runway. Her usual light brown, long sleeved shirt and dark brown waist cincher, black cargo pants with a belt lined with bullets that matched the the strap of her oversized handbag that hung from her right shoulder. She reached up with a gloved hand and pushed her signature sunglasses up her face and brushed the single lock of caramel coloured hair our of her face, the rest of her darker brown hair hidden under a beret that sat on top. Gripping the handle of her bag, she swung it around and it opened up into the chain gun with a large drum magazine on its side. The six barrels spun for a few seconds before she took a bracing position and called out to her. “Give it up, Schnee! You're out gunned! Out manned! And out classed!”

The three members of team CFVY made their appearance just as the melody began its up swing again. Weiss reached down to her side and gripped the pommel of her rapier, Myrtenaster, and spun the revolving chambers containing various different Dusts that was housed inside the hilt as she pulled it out into the opened. She took a step and one became two, she still needed to finish her performance after all, it needed to be perfect. While one form of herself stayed, still in her huntress clothing from years ago, to keep singing, the Weiss that went to confront the enemy was a more current form. A flowing blue dress that danced across the stage, her arms were covered by long sleeve blue shrug that hugged her arms and back tightly. Sapphires danced against her throat as they twinkled and shone in the sunlight. Bringing her weapon to the ready, she slipped her right foot forward and back gently. She was not going to let her performance be stopped, it needed to be perfect.

"Mirror mirror, what's behind you?
Save me from the things I see!"

At the sound of the revving mini-gun of Coco's was dwarfed by a crescendo of music and singing. Weiss spun her Dust chambers to bring up light blue Dust, stabbed the ground at her feet and brought up a wall of ice to protect her and the singer from the barrage of bullets. The Ice shattered away once it was over, just in time for Yatsuhashi and Fox to jump onto the stage and begin their assault on Specialist Schnee. With a flick of her wrist, a cube formed of large black Glyphs appeared around Coco's form, stopping her from moving or firing into the fray.
She was Weiss Schnee; she was never outgunned.

"I can keep it from the world,

Why won't you let me hide from me?"

As Fox and Yatsuhashi decended upon her, a flick of her wrist another black glyph formed in her right hand and easily blocked the massive blade of the green man as her rapier countered a bladed punch from the red one. With a push of her Aura, the two combatants were sent away as a series of white glyphs began to form around her, two smaller ones on either side of her and a larger one from behind her. They watched as two Beowolves charged out of the smaller ones and attacked Fox, their black fur turned a gentle light blue and glowed in the dim room. Fox was forced into an two on one as her knight appeared behind her, standing over fifteen feet and charged Yatsuhashi, the two of them clashed with their massive blades. With Coco still trapped, their trap was foiled, and Weiss pressed her advantage.

She was Weiss Schnee; she was never out manned.

Rushing towards Fox, he was skilled enough to take out the two summons with most of his Aura intact, but the distraction of the summons would be his downfall. Her rapier slipped up and under his guard, pushing his fist out of the way as her off hand slipped behind her back and pulled out her sidearm with practised ease. The tip of her blade pinned his arm in the air as the muzzle of her pistol slammed up under Fox's chin. Horror in his eyes could be seen as the first shot cleared out what was left of his aura, his head jerked back and he spun with the momentum. He tried to slash across her face with his blade but was stopped by her rapier once again, this time the metal slipped into his flesh as the hot muzzle was pressed under his chin again and a bullet ripped through his skull and destroyed his brain. His body fell limply to the ground as both Coco and Yatsuhashi called out his name. Turning over to the larger man, he charged past her knight and Weiss made a large sweeping motion with her rapier, and her knight copied it. The massive blade connected to his stomach and was lifted up into the air, his body shimmered green as the blade continued to carry him him until his Aura ran out, and the blade separated his body into two parts and he fell limply to the ground. Blood staining the stage as his form twitched for a second before stilling into death.

"Mirror, mirror, tell me something,

Who's the loneliest of all?"

With an anguished cry, Coco fired into the prison Weiss had created for her, shattering the wall and charging towards her as quickly as she could while wielding the massive weapon. She was halfway down the stairs when Weiss jerked her arm and a final summon glyph appeared in front of her. Leaping into reality, an light blue Ursa Grimm was falling towards her, his large paws and longer claws ready to rip her to ribbons. She aimed upwards and fired into the summon, but too little damage in so little time did nothing to stop the heavy mass of the bear Grimm from falling on top of her, its claws ripping open her face as the floor opened up under them. Breaking through the ground, the heavy landing of the two beings crashed through the air as the song began its final lull. With no noise coming from the hole, Weiss flicked her weapon, waving whatever blood was left off before returning it onto her hip.

She was Weiss Schnee; she was never out classed.

She took her position in front of herself, the current in front of the past. She opened her mouth and finished off the song that the skeletons have patently waiting for. With no more interruptions from former classmates, she pushed her voice out quietly, making sure her voice echoed through the
stilled air as the audience got ready for her standing ovation.

"I'm the loneliest of all"

She held the last note for just long enough, as she closed her eyes and allowed the final strokes of the piano fade off into the room as her voice drifted off with it. She took a small breath and allowed herself a small smile on yet another perfect performance. She waited for the applause and the cheers, but they never came. Was she not perfect? Did she not hit every note exactly when they were suppose to happen? Opening her eyes to glare and demand the decency of applause, she was shocked to see that she was no longer standing on her stage, instead she was standing in the middle of the dessert. The hot air buffed her skin as she tried to figure out how she got here. The familiar sound of metal sliding and shifting against each other pulled her attention behind her, turning to see Ruby Rose running towards her, deep silver eyes that bled death as beautiful rose petals trailing her as she swung her massive scythe weapon, Crescent Rose. Sweeping low and came up under her arm and dug into her chest and was about to rip her in half-

With a scream, Weiss shot up from her bed and gripped her side with her right hand as a pistol whipped around the room, looking for anyone to shoot. She quickly looked around the room in jerky motions as her breath came in fast and shallow. When she realised she was alone, she let out a sigh and the sidearm fell into her lap as she allowed her arm to give out. Catching her breath, she wiped the cold sweat from her brow and hissed in pain as she lightly rubbed her side gently. Pulling her hand back, she saw a light layer of blood in the palm of her hand. Lifting her left arm up, she looked down and saw her white shirt and bed sheets stained red with the blood from her still healing wound. With another curse, she pushed the pistol back under her pillow and threw the sheets off her body and walked to her bathroom.

Examining the wound on her side, she sighed lightly as the scab hadn't completely healed yet. For some reason, her Aura wasn't healing her wound as quickly as she had expected it to, for one reason or another, her powers were refusing to heal it naturally, so she needed to force it. Pooling her aura into her hand, she pressed it to the wound and hissed as the pain coursed through her chest. After a few moments, the pain faded away and left behind an angry scar with light blue tint to it. Bright against her sun kissed skin, just another blemish to match the other pale and tinted scars she had accumulated since she was pulled into this war. Starting the shower, she cleaned her body of the blood and the sweat from her sleep. Standing under the scalding water, she reflected upon what she saw during the night.

It began as a dream, then it turned into a memory, one that she would rather she forget, the day when the three members of team CFVY confronted her in the field of battle. It didn't happen like in her dream, it wasn't such a clean fight, it was a hard fought battle that resulted in scars across her pale skin. In her dream, she was a master with her semblance and glyphs, in reality, she could barely control her knight on good days, let alone it and two beowolves at the same time. A nice thought, but a thought none the less. In actuality, the fight was extremely difficult. Being outnumbered three-to-one in an old movie theatre gave them ample oppurtunities to inflict wounds onto her. Fox managed to get her neck, resulting in a slight scar along the left side of her neck, Yatsuhashi would have cleaved her in half if she was just a second slower with putting her rapier in front of her chest and Coco managed to land a couple of rounds through her Aura that resulted in five bullet holes in her right thigh and side.

In the end, she managed to succeed in killing all three of them. She ran Fox through his neck with the tip of her weapon, Yatsuhashi fell by her knight opening his chest. She lost control of her knight when Coco landed her hits and only managed to summon an Ursa arm that opened up her face. Bloody and broken, Weiss had killed three more of her former classmates from a life before the war. Shaking her wet head, Weiss cleaned herself of the sweat and blood that came during the
night and then towelled off. The rest of the day was spent looking over mission reports and reading the latest news on what the SDC had accomplished during her absence. With no one to actually be the CEO, Weiss had opted for a the Board to run in while she's out on the front. Her morning was interrupted by a message from her sister, a light smiled graced her lips as she prepared for a nice lunch with her older sister.

Dressed in a casual clothing, blue jeans, a grey shirt and a white jacket to fend of the Atlesian cold that remains during the summer, Weiss waited for her sister at a small table in front of a small cafe in downtown area, one of their favourites. She saw her sister walking towards her down the sidewalk, leaning heavily on her cane as she got closer. Weiss simply stood up and gave her sister a small smile. "I hope you weren't waiting long" Winter asked as she sat down gingerly and hung the cane on the back of her seat. Weiss sat down and looked across the small round table at her.

"Not at all, I'm glad we can do this"

Winter smiled lightly as a waitress walked around and took their orders. Winter smiled at her gently as she took a deep breath. "Yes, its nice to get out of the office time to time. Even more so to enjoy lunch with you" She said as two small cups were placed in front of them and filled with coffee. A small container of cream and a bowel filled with sugar cubes placed in the middle. Weiss smiled lightly as she reached out for the small set of silver tongs to place a cube into her cup when she saw her hand shaking.

She balled her hand into a fist and shoved it under the table before Winter could see, but she knew she already saw when Winter sighed lightly. "Weiss..."

The younger sister closed her eyes and took in a deep breath. "Don't..."

"Sister," Winter said more seriously, pushing away the superior officer voice and dipping into her 'older sister' voice. "This is why I want you home. You have an intermittent tremor in your hand and it's only getting worse"

"I'm fine when I'm out there" Weiss answered simply, not wanting to look into her sister's eyes. "That's ever worse!" She said, her voice rising just to the point where people would take notice. "I bet you'd rather be out there than here right now"

"Of course not" Weiss shot back, but a part in her mind knew it was true. Her constantly shaking hand was proof, it only stilled while she was deployed. Some of the doctors she spoke to when it first developed told her it was PTSD, but she quickly found out that she wasn't afraid of the battle, she wanted more of it. The waitress came back to stop the ensuing argument, thankfully. She placed two plates in front of them. Winter had ordered a simple BLT sandwich and Weiss got a toasted bagel with cream cheese.

"So, any news on this mysterious blond swordsmen?" Weiss asked as she took a small bite of her meal.

Winter shook her head simply as she picked up a half and pressed it together to make it easier to eat. "Nothing yet, but we're still trying" The two of them sat in happy quiet for a few minutes, no longer talking about the war but rather what life back in the main city was life for her sister. Their meal was cut short when a few beeps came from Winter's coat. Pulling out her scroll, she looked through her message and then looked at Weiss. "The General came back early, he's looking to push your meeting with him sooner" Weiss simply nodded and placed a few Lien cards on the table for their meal and left to get ready.
It only took a few minutes to get dressed into her Specialist outfit, she slipped her dress uniform battle plate on over top of her blue short dress. Over the left breast was several colourful stripes of the metals she had earned through her career, each painted on by a skilled hand. With Mystiner at her side, she arrived at the base within an hour from when Winter had gotten the message that he was back and met him in front of a military jeep that was waiting for them. Snapping a salute to General James Ironwood, he replied in kind before shaking her hand. "Thank you for coming so quickly, Specialist Schnee" He said with a small smile as he opened the door for her and got in after her. His hair had more grey than black the last time she had seen him, and he looked like he had aged several years since the Fall of Vale. His white uniform crisp as it always was as he adjusted his red tie lightly.

"Of course, sir. You are the General after all" Weiss said simply as she placed her hands in her lap as the jeep began to drive to wherever they were going. "May I ask about this reassignment you mentioned in your letter, General?" Weiss asked as she turned to look at the highest ranked man in all of Atlas.

"Of course" He said lightly as he reached up and began to scratch at the skin around the thin metal strip that was on his forehead. The neurotransmitter that connected to his artificial limbs that covered the entire right half of his body, making it easier to move more naturally. "We are preparing a new type of weapon to help fight against the Mistrali and their increasing defensive force" He said simply. "But before we can deploy it, we need your help to ready it"

The young woman looked at him with a more than slightly confused look on her face. "My help, Sir?" She asked.

He nodded lightly and let out a sigh. "The engineers are better at explaining to than I am, so please just wait until we get there and everything will make sense, I'm sure" Weiss just nodded and the ride was quiet until they had arrived at a large building in the industrial district and walked in with armed guards standing near the doors. They walked past the front desk and descended down in the elevator. Walking out, she read the large, green sign that read "Polendina Robotics" Perhaps they were improving on the Knight mechs already?

Signing in at the front desk, she clipped her visitors pass to her belt and followed the General through the bright white hallways and past several people wearing white lab coats. They eventually arrived in a large lab where an older man was sitting in front of a computer, trying to figure something out. When he heard the door closed, he quickly looked back and smiled and quickly got out of his seat. "General!" He said in a thick, Northern Atleasian accent.

"Doctor" Ironwood said as he accepted a very enthusiastic handshake from the man. He had thin grey hair that went off in every direction. His coat was a clean white but the dark clothing under it had several burn holes and stitched cuts along it. "Allow me to introduce Specialist Weiss Schnee." He said with a gesture to the young woman next to her. "Weiss, this is Doctor Geppetto Polendina" Weiss accepted an equally enthusiastic handshake from the man. "Any progress, Doctor?" He asked as his hands settled behind his back.

The man shook his head quickly, his white hair shaking wildly. "Nein, all the programming is back to the original, but we cannot seem to get that last part working..." He then looked at Weiss and placed both hands on her shoulders and grinned. "But now we have one of her friends, so maybe...just maybe..."

Weiss gently shook out of the man's grasp and looked over at the General with a confused look. Understanding, he nodded slowly. "Weiss, do you remember Penny Polendina?" Weiss looked back at the man and he could see Penny in him. He had the same shade of green as hers. She
remembered watching as Pyrrha cut the poor woman in pieces on accident, watching as she died in
the middle of the arena for all the world to witness. Slowly, Weiss nodded. "Doctor Polendina is
her father" The man nodded quickly as he grabbed Weiss's hand and began to drag her to another
room nearby, for such an old man he had an iron grip. Ironwood tried to him but it fell on deaf
ears.

"She will be so glad to see one of her friends" He said with a grin as he forced her through the
doorway. Weiss was about to say that she was sorry for his loss and asking who he was talking
about, but was cut off when she heard a high, too happy voice echo through the small room.

"Salutations!"

Taking her eyes off the Doctor and looked into the room and saw something impossible. A young
woman stood before them, a grin on her face with a crooked pink bow in bright orange hair. Her
grey and green dress and white top exactly as it was four years ago. She pulled her hand down
from her salute and stood before Weiss. She blinked slowly and slowly reached out and poked her
shoulder, Penny simply blinked and looked at her with a slightly confused look on her face. "Is
something wrong, Specialist Schnee?" She asked with concern in her voice.

Weiss stared wide-eyed at the woman before her and shook her head slowly in disbelief. "How can
you be here right now?" She asked.

"Father rebuilt me after what happened at the Vytal Festival." She said simply as she looked over
at Geppetto and smiled.

"I don't- I don't understand. You died! I watched you die before my eyes!" Weiss said as she
watched her move around a bit. She felt a hand on her shoulder and looked back to see General
Ironwood standing behind her. "Sir, I don't understand"

The General simply nodded as he slipped his hand back behind his back and stood next to her.
"Well, Penny isn't exactly a normal girl," He said simply. "She's a robot" Weiss looked back at
Penny who simply nodded.

"That is correct!" she said pleasantly, "While most girls are born, I was...made..." Her voice
lowered slightly as she looked out into the distance, her face slipping from the overly happy that
she always had to one that looked like she was remembering something from a lifetime ago. The
Doctor leaned in and placed a hand on the young girl's shoulder.

"What is it, Penny. Do you remember something?" He asked.

She just shook her head slightly. "I don't know...It just feels like I've said that before."

"That's called deja vu, Penny," He said lightly. "It happens to everyone sometimes, its like you feel
like you've already done something before" Penny simply nodded.

"I think I understand." She said as she nodded lightly. "I hope I can unlock the rest of my memories
so that my aura will come back" Penny smiled lightly. "I would like to help out, so many people
are hurting because I'm damaged..." While her father rubbed her back, trying to comfort her, Weiss
settled that Penny was a robot. Sure, they could make an entire body out of prosthetic limbs,
General Ironwood was proof of that. Then an AI could probably control it, but an Aura is
something that a machine shouldn't be able to have.

"You have an Aura, Penny?" Weiss asked. Penny nodded slightly, her face returning to her
normal.
"I am the first synthetic person who can generate an Aura! At least, I used to" She corrected. "Ever since Father rebuilt me, I haven't been able to call it, and whenever I go back into my programming, I'm met with a strange firewall that I can not get through no matter what I, or the others, do, despite the fact that my programming is unchanged from my first iteration seven years ago"

"What kind of firewall?" Weiss asked lightly. Penny made a strange face.

"I call it a firewall because I cannot describe it otherwise" She said while looking at Weiss. When she asked how she would describe it, Penny replied with a simple word. "Red" Weiss was about to say something when Penny's eyes went wide and searched for something on the wall in front of her. "I have lost communications with Knight 756-c" She said as she took a step forward. "Someone has infiltrated the facility" They all then looked at each other for a moment before Ironwood pulled out his scroll and began to get into contact with security. "That Knight was patrolling the hallways near the vaults"

"If they managed to get that close to the vaults, they are no normal thief" The Doctor said as he looked at them.

Weiss quickly pulled her rapier out and looked at Geppetto. "Which way to the vaults?" She asked. He told her to follow the green lines on the walls and that will get her there. With a nod, she began to move quickly through the halls, following the panted green line. Just as she was about to turn the corner, she stopped when she saw the familiar face of Blake Belladonna. The raven haired woman stood before her, the collapsed form of her weapon in her hand, forming an intimidating handgun, in the other was a large metal case. Before she could say anything, Blake raised her weapon and aimed the muzzle of Gambol Shroud at her. On reflex, Weiss quickly reached behind her and pulled out her own sidearm and aimed it at the cat faunus. "Blake...I can't let you take that" She said. She didn't know what it was, but she had to stop her.

Blake simply shook her head, her eyes wild as her grip tightened on the case. "I need this more than you know, Weiss." She said quietly. "With this, I can go back to her." She said as she slowly walked towards the corner. Half her body and the case was obscured by the corner with the weapon still pointed at Weiss.

"Go back to who?" Weiss asked. Blake didn't answer, her golden eyes staring deeply into Weiss. "Talk to me Blake! We can work this out!" She called out to her. Nothing was returned. "Blake! I'll shoot you! Just give it back!" Silence. Gritting her teeth, Weiss took aim and waited for Blake to move. When she didn't she aimed carefully and shot at her shoulder, only for it to pass through her body and hit the wall behind her. Her form turned to shadow and disappeared. Cursing, she sprinted to the corner to see the ends of her jacket and her ribbon disappear around a corner down the hall and Weiss gave chase. She ran down the halls, using her glyphs to speed herself up, calling after her to stop.

Chasing her through the fourth hallway, she stopped when she saw Blake halt suddenly. In front of Blake stood Penny, her face straight and serious, her hands at her sides and ready for a fight. "That case belongs to the Military State of Atlas. I request that you return it immediately or I will take it back by force" Penny warned the black haired woman. Blake was frozen in disbelief, just like Weiss was met Penny again. Suddenly, the sound of something tearing appeared behind her. Looking back, Weiss saw a swirling portal of red and black appeared behind her. Looking back at Blake, she was met with the muzzle again and just barely got out of the way when rounds skimmed her head. Penny swung her arm out and a blade shot out of her back and impaled one of Blake's shadows as she jumped over Weiss and right into the portal and quickly disappeared a second afterwards.
They were left alone in the hall as Penny ran up and helped Weiss up with ease. "Are you alright, Specialist?" She asked quickly.

"Yes, thank you, Penny." She said as she corrected her skirt and plate.

"Who was that?" Penny asked as she inspected the area where the portal was.

"A friend, but I'm sure anymore..."

Chapter End Notes

And we're back with another super late chapter. Sorry.

So, if Rooster Teeth doesn't bring Penny back, I am going to write a strongly worded letter, shove it into a bottle of petrol, lighting it on fire and throwing it through their front door. She is a robot, she can come back damnit! Bring back the Gingers!

As always, if you liked it please leave a Kudo if you haven't already, it goes a long way but a comment goes even further! Any and all feedback is always welcome and as always, thank you for reading my little piece of madness.
Chapter Notes

Yes! Managed to get this before Vol. 4 release.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Tarnished Gem

Pt I

It had been three months since the White Fang attack on Beacon and capital city of the kingdom of Vale, the creatures Grimm overrunning the streets and buildings, killing anyone who was left behind by being drawn to the fear and despair they gave off. Emerald stood on the roof of a building on the outskirts of the city, red eyes watching as a pack of Beowolves hunt down what was probably the last person in the capitol besides herself and those associated with Cinder.

She watched as the pair were flushed out of their hiding place by the roaming pack, a mother with a common face and brown hair was running desperately, her arms wrapped around her child as she sprinted with her last bit of strength. The pack closed in around them cutting off any escape and any hope of survival. Seeing this, Emerald's hand went to reach for her revolver on the back of her hips to help them, no one deserved that kind of fate. Just as she was about to act, she felt a presence beside her, her blood froze in her veins as her breath caught in her throat. The glass heels clicking as Cinder stood beside her and stared out at the scene as it unfolded.

The two women watched as the pack circled the mother and child, and in her last moment of life the mother set her child down and stood it up. Tears streamed down her face as she whispered her last goodbyes and empty promises that everything would be okay. In one hand she cupped her child's face and directed it's attention away from her other hand holding a pistol. Placing the muzzle against the child's head, she gave her flesh and blood one last act of mercy, and fired a round through the brain, saving it from being eaten alive.

The loud crack made Emerald jump lightly, her eyes unblinking as the child's body flopped onto the ground like a doll. With deep breaths, the mother looked up at the creatures as they grew closer and closer to her. She raised the pistol, placed it against her temple and pulled the trigger, only for an empty click to echo through the silence. With her eyes wide in horror, the creatures pounced and tore her apart. She didn't even scream.

The two women watched as the pack devoured the woman for long minutes before Cinder spoke, breaking her train of thought. "We have an operation in Mistral that I want you to head" Emerald looked over and looked at her. Her red dress immaculate, dark hair hanging over her left eye gently, a large band covering the place where it used to be as well as a large scar cupping her other eye, her only working eye still not looking away from the human feast that was unfolding.

"An opportunity has presented itself to us, and I mean to capitalise on it" Her eye glowed slightly as she handed her a large scroll. Numbly, Emerald grabbed it and looked at it, the file must have
already been downloaded before the Dragon destroyed the tower. On it was someone she recognised.

"That Arc kid?" She asked as she looked through the files, each page was filled with useful information that could be used for anything from blackmail to hostage demands and torture. "What are we doing with him?" She asked as she tried to block out the sounds of bones being snapped and flesh being torn off by powerful jaws.

"Something happened between him and his friends, he's in Mistral now while the others are in one of the neighbouring cities along the coast." She said as her gaze moved from the pack of Grimm finishing off their snack to the large tower with the Dragon still frozen on the side.

"What would you like me to do?" She asked as she lowered the large scroll and looked at the woman who had given her so much over the last three years. Emerald was so grateful to her, but a feeling in the back of her head continued to gnaw at her stomach, she pushed the feeling aside and set her free hand on her hip and raised an eyebrow as her eyes moved from Cinder to Mercury, who was busy recording the whole event to be posted somewhere for propaganda purposes hopefully, and not for his own horrid hobby.

"If you want him out of the picture, I think we should just put a bullet in his head and call it a day," Emerald said simply as she continued to watch Mercury as a grin crept up on his lips from reviewing his video.

Suddenly, Emerald felt the back of Cinder's hand gently caress her cheek. Her red eyes shifted over as her body froze from the contact. Normally, such contact from the woman would have warmed her heart, but now it simply chilled her soul. This simple gesture would have been seen as endearing, but if one knows Cinder for any length of time, this gesture was the equivalent of being backhanded across the face.

"Don't think..." Cinder spoke with her velvety voice as the back of her fingers gently trailed down her jawline and off her chin only to come back up and cup the other side of her face affectionately. "Obey" The woman's left eye began to glow like an inferno raging inside of the beautiful colour, her voice spoke of love and affection, but her face showed anger and hatred bubbling just beneath the surface. She was still angry about the red girl appearing and putting a stop to the dragon in a flash of brilliant silver, she would not tolerate any further failures. "I don't want him dead, I want him broken"

"Yes ma'am"

An entire month of travelling, tracking and planning went into the next operation. The sun was just beginning to set when Emerald walked through the rank and file of Mistrali soldiers running back and forth through the frozen land on the northern part of the kingdom, preparing for Atlas's assault after they finally got word from Vacuo about their attack and subsequent Fall.

The ruins of an ancient city were filled with several thousand soldiers and three hundred special forces personnel, easily worth fifty soldiers each, if not them, two dozen airships floated in preparation for the impending battle. Far off in the distance, the Atlesian Second Assault Force could be seen, making their way over the ocean and towards them. Twice as many destroyers and dozens of smaller dropships and bullheads ready to deploy uncountable ground soldiers on a moment's notice.

It took another hour to track the blond man down, sitting on a crate and looking down at a red and gold sword in his hand, two bands of copper around the blade and two small emerald tear drop pendants hanging off the end of the handle. His hair had grown out a bit since she had seen him
last at Beacon, his black hoodie was dirty and white armour scuffed with dried mud and filth.

A stubble apparent on his chin as he ran his fingers down the flat of the blade slowly. The dark skinned woman took a few deep breaths to calm herself as she took one last look around to make sure no one was looking at them or would notice what was about to happen. Closing her eyes and concentrating, she spoke just loud enough to get his attention. "Jaune?"

His body tensed up. Wide, blue eyes looked up at her and his jaw dropped slightly. "Pyrrha?" He slowly stood off his seat and stared directly at her. If anyone would look at this, they would see a dark skinned woman with mint green hair talking to a boy with blond hair. What Jaune saw was the long dead woman he spent an entire year with standing before him. In the entire month of preparation for this moment, Emerald had trained and studied the Invincible Girl to be able to dawn her body like a costume and become her.

"Is that really you?" He choked back a sob as tears welled and slipped from the corner of his eyes. To sell the disguise, Emerald tilted her head lightly to make Pyrrha doing the same, a soft smile graced her lips as he let out a sob and began to wipe his face with his sleeve, trying to clear off his tears. "I've missed you. So much, Pyrrha" He said as he began to walk towards her.

Emerald allowed him to come to her, he began to ramble on about everything that had happened, how he attacked Ruby and the rest of his team. Blaming the red girl on Pyrrha's death for not being fast enough. Going to Mistral to try and apologise to her parents only to find them drafted into the military. How stupid he was for never noticing her before, and only through hindsight did he realise her feelings. Eventually, he held up her sword. "I fixed your sword!" He exclaimed with a desperate smile,"I mean kinda, I guess? I had to use your circlet to forge the pieces back together, and I can't get it back to the rifle or spear because of that..."

He showed off the repairs he made, tears continued to fall from his eyes as he finally lowered his arm. Behind her, muted bangs got everyone's attention. A few seconds later, explosions ripped through the city as the battle finally began. Jaune looked down at the ground and sighed. "Atlas is attacking, I know I promised your parents that I would fight for your home, but I don't think I'll survive this fight..." He said softly as he looked past her and saw bullheads beginning their descent to drop ground forces off. "I'll be seeing you soon, though, so it's not all bad..." He said with a soft smile.

Cinder's voice echoed through her mind. Taking a step forward, Emerald/Pyrrha placed her hand on his breastplate and the other cupping his cheek. "Jaune, you can't die. Not yet" Her voice was soft and warm. Leaning in, Emerald gently brushed her lips against his, the kiss slowly formed as his hand slowly moved up and was placed on her hip. She felt him kiss back as his eyes closed and tasted the lip balm Emerald spent a week to track down for this moment.

A simple kiss to seal the deal, to make him do anything she wanted. To her, a kiss was nothing. She had done much worse for far less in her time as a petty thief, as skilled as she was, pickpocketing made enough to just barely stop starvation, but she still needed a place to sleep. She was ready to kiss him, she was ready for him to kiss her back, but she was not ready for was the weight of his Aura that came crashing down around her.

Jaune was channelling his Aura and all of his feelings for the dead woman into Emerald. She quickly became lost in his arms, how could one man's Aura be so massive? She felt like a mouse in front of a giant, but for how much power he held, she felt completely safe in his arms. His Aura wrapped around and flowed through her, she felt her soul glow in his warmth, she felt how much he loved the woman she was pretending to be.

Her mind went fuzzy, she was getting drunk off his love and deepen the kiss against him. Her hand
slipping from his cheek and ran through his blond hair, pulling him closer against her. Her heart hammered inside her chest as she felt the tiny pricks of his stubble as they brushed against her face, her mind racing, trying to find a way to live her life pretending to be someone else, just to stay by him.

An explosion nearby forced them to break the kiss, she stumbled as Jaune suddenly pulled a bronze shield from his back and blocked the most of falling debris from hitting her. Quickly realising that her disguise broke with the distraction, she rallied her thoughts as he turned around to look at her. Quickly, before he could notice she was not Pyrrha, she grabbed his face and forced another kiss to close his eyes. He easily fell back into the kiss, she tried to rein her feelings and her mind back into place as his Aura flowed through her once more.

Concentrating, she pulled the dead woman back over her features and broke the kiss slowly, keeping one hand on his cheek, she brushed her cheek against his as she guided his head into her neck. She felt his lips gently pressing kisses against her skin as her breath moved over his ear, in a tiny whisper she whispered her command to him. "You can't die, Jaune. I haven't forgiven you yet" Pyrrha's voice whispered into his ear. She felt him pull away from her gently, but she kept his head against her neck. "You will fight" She continued. "And fight, and fight, until you die. Only then, can you be forgiven"

She released him, and used her Semblance to simply disappear in front of his eyes. Taking a few quiet steps back, she watched as Jaune Arc began to desperately look around, searching for the ghost of his love. "Pyrrha?" He called out to the nothing around him. Tears fell from his eyes as he fell to his knees and clutched the blade he had reforged. Sobbing into the steel, she felt her own heartbreak as she stood before him, hidden with her powers. After a few moments, her words finally sunk in. He slowly got to his feet and gripped the blade and shield hard, his hands shaking with pressure as Atlas forces made it to the ground and deployed their foot soldiers.

Gritting his teeth, soft blue eyes turned hard, love turned to hatred as he let out a bellowing war call and sprinted to the battle for her forgiveness. Emerald stood numbly and watched as he ran as fast as he could, he was lost in a mass of bodies and explosions and was lost from her sight. She stood there, staring out to the battle, trying to find him but ended up turning away and began to head back to where Cinder was waiting on a hill overlooking the battlefield. A gust of wind blew past her and she felt cold through her heart and soul.

Making the climb back to the top, Cinder was waiting for her. A small smile on her face as she looked over the battle as it developed from far away. Risking a look back, she could see Jaune in the far distance, fighting back a tide of while soldiers and Knight robots as explosions littered the sky, a number of Atlas destroyers fell apart in the air and began to fall back towards the ground. "Beautiful..." Cinder whispered as the carnage continued. The Fall Maiden looked over at Emerald and gently placed a hand on her cheek, forcing her to look into her burning eye. "You did a magnificent job" She said as she leaned in and place a gentle kiss on her lips.

Normally, Emerald would do anything for that, she would even saw her own leg off just to kiss Cinder, but now, she felt even colder than before. The black haired woman pulled away and licked her lips in thought. "Wipe that off, it tastes awful..." She said as she gently brushed Emerald's lips with her thumb before walking away slowly. Emerald tasted her own lips as she looked back out to the war, several more Atlas ships were falling out of the sky, as Mistrali forces were beginning to turn the tide.

All Emerald could taste on her lips was the last visage of a dead girl, Jaune, and burnt remains of the woman's namesake. Cinder went inside of her tent without another word, Mercury was busy recording the battle on his scroll with a grin plastered on his face. She walked to the fire pit in the
middle of their little camp and sat down on a fallen log as the air was filled with the sounds of explosions, war and death. Placing her elbows on her knees, she ran her hands through her pale green hair and gripped tightly, trying to get control over her feelings. How could she fall for him of all people? The only person she had ever wanted kissed her and felt nothing!

She was about to take her frustrations out on the log she was sitting on when a hand was placed on her back and began to rub lightly. Looking over, she saw little Neo give her a sad smile. She had been really quiet ever since the Fall. Well, more quiet than the mute girl usually was, she was always full of expression and often had a little smirk, watching someone you care about die tends to do change people. Accepting the little bit of reassurance, Emerald got up and walked over to the tent she shared with Neopolitan and got ready for the night. The multicoloured girl followed her in and she tried to sleep with the sounds of war stopped her from getting any actual sleep.

Hours passed, the battle had stopped. She didn't need to see to know which side had won, but they were far enough away that they would not be found right away. With Neo cuddled up to her side, she slowly slipped into a sleep, only to wake up in a new place.

Looking around, she was suddenly standing in the middle of a large round disc, all around her was an endless white void with massive gears spun and clicked together above her head and all around her. Spinning around slowly, she made one whole rotation when a was suddenly a desk sitting where one wasn't before. Behind it, sat a man with grey hair and small brown eyes with a pair of small circular tinted glasses on the bridge of his nose. The Headmaster of Beacon academy sipped from his coffee cup before setting it down silently. "Hello, miss Sustrai," Ozpin said gently as he relaxed his shoulders. In a panic, Emerald reached behind her and pulled out one of her weapons and pointed it at the man.

"Where the hell am I?" She demanded. "How did I get here?"

A soft smile came from the man dressed in a green turtleneck and a black jacket. He took another sip of his drink before speaking again. "You're dreaming, miss Sustrai." And to prove his point, he gestured to her with his cup and her weapon fired on its own, but instead of a bullet coming out, a bouquet of flowers popped out of the muzzle. Examining it, she released her grip on the weapon and it fell to the floor, only for the ground to ripple like water and the weapon lost under it.

"Okay..." She said lightly as she looked back up to the man. "So...are you part of my dream or are you actually here..." She asked slowly as she took another look around the room.

"That all depends on you" He began. "If you want, you can wake up and simply continue living your life. Or, you can try to change it for the better..." He suggested as he leaned back in his seat and sipped his drink, pausing to collect his thoughts. "What I'm offering you, is a change of heart" He produced a black pawn chess piece and held it up to her. "If you stop working for her start working for me, you can undo everything she had worked towards. Fix the world she made" He placed the black pawn down and when he moved his hand, it became white.

Emerald shook her head and gestured around her. "How can you fix this? so many are dead! Entire nations at war with each other! There will be no one left at the end of this"

Ozpin nodded slowly as he set his mug down and laced his fingers together. "Humanity will survive, it always has." He said gently. "You think this is the first time humanity was threatened?" Emerald blinked slowly, thinking as he continued. "Information, Emerald. Is what I'm asking for" He said simply as he raised his hand to her. "Anything you can tell us to help stop Cinder's plans in the future. Please think about it" He said simply as he reached up, snapped his fingers.

Just like that, her eyes opened and she sat up slightly. The tent shook with the rough winds but was
otherwise still warm with her and Neo sharing the small space. With a deep breath, she laid back down in her sleeping bag and held her hands over her eyes and pressed down, trying to come to a decision for the man's offer. A gentle hand rubbed her shoulder slowly, looking over, she saw Neo looking at her with her off coloured eyes, an almost pleading look in her eyes. With a few blinks, Emerald spoke quietly.

"You took his deal, didn't you..." After a few moments, Neo nodded and looked down lightly. Emerald took a deep breath and looked up at the ceiling of their tent, and made her up her mind. "I'm with you, Neo" The smaller woman smiled and nodded. Just like that, Emerald had betrayed Cinder, and she didn't feel bad about it. In fact, she felt relieved.

Emerald sat on a tree stump, looking across the camp fire that was made when Yang, Neo and herself moved after killing those people near the lake. Neo simply stared into the fire, she didn't want to remember that day, but Emerald told the story to Yang because she was done lying, done hiding. The blonde woman simply stared at her, wide violet eyes refusing to blink. Slowly, she shook her head and tried to form thoughts. Silence between the tree woman spanned several minutes before Yang finally spoke. "I can't believe that..." She said simply. "No. No way in hell did Jaune do all that..." Yang looked over and Neo, who simply nodded to Emerald story.

"It really happened, Yang" She said numbly. "You weren't there when he went off, he's not the person you know anymore." Emerald took a deep breath and stared into the fire. "I tricked you into attack Mercury on Cinder's orders. I made Pyrrha destroy Penny because it was Cinder's orders. And then, I went to a man, kissed him and fell in love with him, then turned him into a monster because they were Cinder's orders. I was simply used by her to achieve her goals. What I thought was affection was simply possession. Jaune showed me what actual love feels like, and Cinder didn't love me"

Silence overcame the group again and Emerald slowly stood up and stretched her back a bit, groaning out in strain as she looked at the other two members of her party. "Go ahead and get some sleep, I'll take first watch" The two nodded and set up the two sleeping bags that were in the emergency kits they took from the bullhead and settled next to the fire.

Emerald watched them for a few moments before walking into the woods to gather up a few small twigs and scraps to throw into the fire, when she lost sight of Yang and Neo she reached into her pocket and pulled out a small dark red tube. She looked down at it and ran her thumb down the side lightly before pulling the cap off and twisted the bottom to pushed a little bit of the lip balm out of the top.

She didn't have much left, her only memory of the one time she felt loved in her life. Applying a small amount to her bottom lip, she pushed it around to coat her full lips before replacing the cap and pocketing it once more. With a heavy sigh, she looked up at the stars and the broken moon and allowed her mind to play out that kiss one more time before returning to the other two, but not before wiping a few tears from her cheek.
Edit: I changed Cinder's apperance in this chapter to better reflect her new look in the season 4 opening since *I can't watch the first episode because I don't have Rooster teeth first!* So I'll have to watch it tomorrow T-T

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo, it really means a lot to me knowing you guys are liking it, a comment will mean even more. Feedback is always welcome and thank you for taking the time to read my story!
The gentle smell of baking stirred young Ruby from her slumber, a small smile came across her face as she opened her silver eyes and looked out the window of her bedroom. Outside, she saw a small black bird tilt its head before spreading its wings and flew off into the mid-morning air. Pushing the blankets off, Ruby sat up and stretched her arms and gave a small smile. Looking across the room, she saw Yang's bed empty, her blankets nearly spilling over onto the floor. She would have already gone to Signal for the day, soon, she'll be able to go there too hopefully.

Slipping off her bed, she landed onto the ground with a quiet thud and began to walk through the house towards the kitchen, following the smells of freshly baked cookies. Going down the stairs, using both feet at a time so as not to fall, she made her way to the kitchen where her mother was standing with her back towards her. Her while cloak flowing behind her with the hood down and her long flowing hair cascading down her back. As Ruby moved towards her, Summer looked back and smiled, the sun coming through the window, blinding Ruby and making it so she can't see her face. "Good morning, Ruby" She said with a smile as she set a sponge in the sink and went to dry her hands.

"Morning, Mama," Ruby said as she giggled as her mother leaned down and kissed her head softly.

"Did you have a good sleep?" She asked as she walked over and began to gather things for Ruby's breakfast. Setting a large glass of milk for the young girl.

"Yep!" She said happily as she grabbed the glass with both hands and brought it to her mouth. Gulping away at the milk, she placed the glass back on the table and licked away a milk moustache that made her mother laugh. "Where's Daddy?" She asked looking around to try and find her blond haired father.

"He went to work after dropping your sister off at Signal." She said softly as the oven opened and the heavenly smell of cookies filled the house.

"When I grow-up, I'm going to become a Huntress like you!" Ruby called out happily. Her mother froze, slightly, one of the cookies dropped to the floor as she tried to put it on a plate. Ruby felt a slight tremor pass through the house, everything shook for a second before everything settled again.

"Oh, honey...you can't be a Huntress" Summer said as she turned around and placed the plate of cookies in front of her daughter, her foot stepping on the single fallen one, completely ignored.
"W-why not?"

"Because, Ruby-" She looked up at her mother's face, but it wasn't Summer. It was someone else. Silver eyes replaced with flames inside empty sockets. Her skin pulled and pale in decay, hair fell in clumps onto the floor. "-You are a soldier"

An explosion ripped through the kitchen, blowing a large hole in the wall and knocking her mother off to the side. Ruby was blown off her seat and fell onto her back. Slowly, she got to her feet and looked around, picking up Crescent Rose from under the rubble, she quickly reloaded the weapon and looked down at the woman who was laying on the ground. She was right, Ruby wasn't a Huntress, not anymore, she was a soldier cloaked in crimson, death made in flesh and blood.

Stepping from the hole in the wall, Ruby found herself in the middle of a city that was under attack from Atleasin forces. She could see the sky was filled with Atlas's ships and the streets were filled with soldiers on both sides. Sprinting down the cobblestone streets, she left a trail of rose petals as she engaged the enemy. With a swing of her scythe, she killed the soldiers in white armour plates with ease as she ran and jumped through the battlefield.

This was the second city that Atlas attacked along the Valenese coastline, trying to find the Reclamation Army's main base. They had managed to get almost all the people out before the attack happened, they began the assault by bombarding the city with cannons and ferried soldiers with Bulkheads, only to be met by Reclamation forces and their weapons. The battle had been waging for hours now, the enemy paying for every block they took with blood.

Ruby ran down a street into a group of soldiers. Leaping into the middle, she swung her blade around in a wide arc and fired a shot, cleaving cleanly through several at once. Being too fast for a counter attack, Ruby zigzagged between soldiers, killing with her sharp blade and large calibre rifle. Seconds later, twenty or more people were dead at her feet, blood blended in with her cloak and stained her white shirt. With a deep breath, she ran down the path to continue her defence of the city.

From the corner of her eye, she saw a familiar white of someone's hair. Stopping, she watched as the tips of the hair disappeared behind a building. Knowing who it belonged to, she pulled back the breach and loaded another round in her weapon before following the familiar scent of mint and vanilla that belong to Weiss Schnee. The world shook with another large explosion ripped through several buildings near by, but still, she tracked down the enemy.

Following the path Weiss took, she found herself in the ruins of a large hall, she took a moment to make sure she was fully loaded before entering through the destroyed door. Making her way to the middle of the hall, she saw Weiss standing in the middle of the main room, standing on a black and white checkered floor, waiting for Ruby.

Her hair was in the off centre ponytail as it always was, she wasn't wearing her white battle plates. Instead, she wore a long, flowing blue dress that hugged her curves nicely, beautiful sapphires hung from her neck and sat against the small part of exposed skin just below her neck. With a small smile, Weiss turned to face her as Ruby slowly walked towards her, weapon at the ready. Slowly, Weiss raised her hand towards the red woman. "Dance with me?" Weiss asked softly. Ruby looked around slowly, no one else was here, it was just the two of them.

"But...you're the enemy," Ruby said slowly, unsure if this was a trap or not.

"Please?"

Slowly, Ruby walked towards her and reached out for her hand. When she touched the cool skin,
her clothing turned to petals and flew away, replaced with a long flowing red strapless dress that faded to black near the bottom, her arms had long black gloves that reached above her elbows. A pattern of red petals flowed upwards from the bottom to the top, changing colour from red to black to balance out the contrast of the dress. With a smile, Weiss took a step towards her and placed a hand on her hip while she turned and faced her.

Slowly, they began to dance with careful steps. The battle that waged outside became a symphony for them, an orchestra of war created a song for them to dance to. Ruby didn't know what dance they were doing, she simply followed Weiss's lead as the world slowly melted away. Ruby knew this was a dream, it had to be, but it felt so real, she didn't want it to end. Slowly, Weiss moved some of her tinted hair out of her face and smiled. "You're so beautiful," Weiss said quietly to her. Ruby smiled softly as they continued.

"How many times must I have this dream?" Ruby asked softly as they danced in the dark hall. The battle music echoing into the air, a soft smile placed on Weiss's face as she felt a tap on her shoulder. Looking back, she was greeted by another friendly face. Professor Ozpin smiled softly at the two of them.

"May I cut in?" He asked gently. Ruby felt Weiss release her from her grip and bow before walking away. Ozpin took her hand in his as the music changed but kept the same tempo. Ruby gently placed a hand on his shoulder as they continued the dance. "Hello, Miss Rose," He said finally after a few moments of them dancing.

"Hello, Headmaster"

"I need a school in order to be a headmaster, Miss Rose," He said gently as they swayed slowly. Around them the room began to change, the darkness began to lift as small candles began to light themselves, shadows of people dance began to fill the floor. "How have you been? It's been a couple of years since we last talked"

"Poor" Ruby said simply. "I don't know what to do anymore. I feel empty when I wake up, only in these dreams do I feel like I used to."

"Have faith, Ruby." He said to her. "You are one of the most skilled Huntresses that I've ever had the pleasure of knowing"

"I'm not a Huntress," Ruby said darkly. "I'm a soldier"

"No, Ruby," He said as he stopped and released her from his grasp. "You are a hero"

"I'm not a hero!" Ruby shouted at him. "My dad was a hero, and he's dead!" She held her hand out to gesture out somewhere to get her point across. "I can never be like him! Like my mother! They all died saving people while I'm killing them!"

Ozpin nodded slowly as he watched her. "I know it is hard, Ruby. But know that Atlas is not the true enemy here. They are simply a means to an end, and what that end is I still don't know, but I know that more people like your father will end up dying because of it"

Anger rose inside of her. "Then who is the enemy?!" She yelled at the in the black suit and green scarf. She felt a chill run up her back suddenly, the shadows still and all turned to face behind her. Slowly, she turned around to see a woman in a flowing red dress made. Her hair covered the left half of her face and a burning golden eye stared her down. She walked down a set of stairs slowly, her glass heels clicking as she walked towards her. Cinder Fall's gaze landed onto Ruby and she smirked slightly.
"She is only a pawn," Ozpin said gently as he walked to stand next to Ruby. At the end of his words, Ruby noticed a growing darkness behind Cinder began to form. It began to devour the shadow people as it grew larger and larger. In the heart of the darkness was a pair of glowing red eyes, staring down at her. As the darkness grew more and more, she looked over at Ozpin who nodded lightly. "This is the enemy, she is the one who will bring the end if we allow her to" Ruby was about to say something when she saw Glynda Goodwitch walk towards them, she gently placed a hand on his shoulder and spoke quietly.

"Its time, Sir," She said softly. He nodded and placed his hand on Ruby's shoulder.

"Have faith, Ruby. What happened at Beacon was no accident, a darkness is coming to pull the pillars that support this world apart, and two have already Fallen. Those claiming to be allies will be hiding their true agendas. Trust in your friends and family, for it is only in unity will we have the strength to push back the darkness that is growing, so be strong, Ruby. Keep fighting, and they will come help you, like you helped them"

He smiled at her as he placed his hands behind his back and began to walk away. The whole building shook once again and pieces of the ceiling began to fall onto the ground. She watched as Ozpin and Glynda walk off, her view of them quickly obscured by a large chunk of stone landing in front of her. She looked up and watched as another chunk broke off and was falling directly on top of her, she closed her eyes and waited for it to come.

Waking up with a jump, she could still feel the shaking from her dream, Ruby quickly landed on the ground and grabbed Crescent Rose from her mattress that she was sleeping on, she found it comforting to sleep next to her weapon at night. Looking around, she saw the other members of D-squad sitting up in their bunks or on their feet, weapons never out of arms reach. Eventually, the shaking stopped and everyone blew a sigh of relief. "The hell was that?" Ruby asked as she stood up straighter and collapsed her rifle back to the compact variant.

"Tremors" The woman with the buzzed head, Sapphi, told her. "They've been happening ever since Atlas bombed Vacuo city. Probably cracked the planet or something..." She let out a yawn and laid back down in the bunk below the one Ruby commandeered. With a heavy sigh, she placed her weapon back on her bunk and jumped back in. It was still too early to be up yet, but that didn't mean Ruby fell back asleep.

She could feel her weapon pressing against her bare leg. She was only wearing a pair of boy shorts and a tight fitting undershirt, basic military underwear for females. She could feel her dog tags resting inside of her shirt, she toyed with them gently as she let the dream play out in her mind once more.

This was the third time had that dream, her home in Patch, her mother, the battle, Weiss and the dancing. She sighed and closed her eyes, trying to relive that moment. She knew such emotions were bad, but she didn't have to be a soldier so early in the morning, she could just be Ruby, Weiss, who had yelled and screamed at her when they first met had somehow wormed a place in her heart. Then the presence of Ozpin invaded her dream, this was the first time he showed up, unsure why she saw him this time, she tried to reflect upon his words and figure out what her dream meant.

Giving up, she looked at the wall where an old clock ticked away. She still had another hour before D-squad was supposed to get up with the rest of the base, with a breath, she slid out of her bunk again and began to root through her things and got dressed for the day. It only took a minute to dress in her combat skirt, black leggings, white shirt and corset. She clipped her cloak on her shoulders and began to head out of the large tent when the officer with pale blue eyes, Midori, spoke up.
"Where you off to, Rose?" He asked as he sat up in his bunk and began to pull his boots on tiredly.

"Bathroom." She said simply. She could already feel the shakes started to form in her hands, she didn't want to talk to anyone, but arguing would only delay her next hit further.

"You sure use the bathroom a lot..." He said as he narrowed his eyes at her.

"The food here sucks." She said simply as she clipped her weapon on her lower back and adjusted the cloak around her neck. He just nodded and stayed silent as he began to pull on the rest of his uniform on at a pace suited for someone who woke up an hour earlier than he was supposed to. Making her way to the main building, she walked into the bathroom and checked to make sure no one else was there. Satisfied, she walked up to the sink and looked at her reflection in the mirror she punched when she first arrived at the base three days ago.

Setting her things on the side, she pulled out the bottle of Aura stimulant and examined it carefully, she was running low, maybe two or three hits left in it. She will need to go get her crate if it was sent with the supplies that were transferred to the base from Vale to Vacuo. Pushing a clean needle through the rubber top, she pulled the milky white and filled the syringe and took a deep breath. Pulling the rubber tube out again and tried her arm off and injected herself the same she always does.

Feeling the drug attack her system, she let out a groan and leaned her head against the mirror, letting the cool glass rest against her warm forehead, she took a few breaths before she began to put the things away, hiding all evidence of her habit from the world. "my poor Ruby..." She froze. Looking around, she saw no one in the room. Another quick sweep of the room revealed that she was truly alone.

"Ruby...why do you do this?" Her head looked over to the mirror, slowly she walked towards it, her heart hammering inside her chest. Looking in the mirror, she saw her mother once again. Disappointment in her silver eyes. "All she wanted to do was help, why do you push your friends away?" Ruby shook her head and placed her hands over her ears, trying to block the voice of her mother out. She was dead, she was dead for so long. Why was she coming back now?

"Rose?" Ruby stood up and looked back to see one of the other soldiers walking in. "You okay?" She quickly looked back at the mirror and only saw herself. She pulled her hair in front of her eyes to cover the glow the best she could, it would wear off in an hour or so.

"Yeah...Fine" She said as she pushed past him in a hurry. The day continued as it normally did, nothing happening. A few times she would have to give orders to her new squad, while a couple of them were reluctant to follow her at first, she proved to be an effective leader during exercises, it didn't hurt that she beat several of them when she first met them, everyone now knew that you don't fuck with Sargent Major Rose. It was after lunch when she was called into action. Getting the squad together, eight members plus Ruby were called to attention as an officer walked towards them.

"Alright, D-squad. You're going out on a rescue mission" The officer said simply as he spread a map over the table and began to point to a small town that was north of them, closer to the kingdom capital. "A while ago, a hunter went dark in this town, so we sent another to see if we can get them back. Hunters are the only thing stopping Atlas from stomping us to the ground, so you're important" He said locking eyes with Ruby.

"Unfortunately, we got word that the second Hunter is in need of help, the first is badly hurt and the town is crawling with Grimm. Your mission is to bring both Hunters back in one piece" Ruby nodded and looked over at the squad, she was met with nods and determination in their eyes. "Get
it done" The officer said before handing the map to Ruby and walking away. Minutes later, the whole squad was decked out in combat vests, rifles and enough ammo and supplies for a week long trip. It would only take a day to get there, but it pays to be prepared. Everyone loaded up into two jeeps and they drove out into the desert, leaving the city of Ritrr behind.

Out in a forest somewhere, Ozpin's eyes slowly fluttered open. Looking around, he found himself sitting in an old chair in his little shack. A home he had found to take refuge from the war and Cinder Fall. With a low groan, he pushed himself out of his chair and walked over to the door, where he opened it slowly and saw the green forest around him. Inhaling the scent of the forest, he took a deep breath and slowly reached inside of his jacket pocket and pulled out a small pair of glasses, one of the lens were cracked. "You are not the only one who has lost because of this senseless war, Ruby"

He said quietly as he ran his thumb absently over the glasses of Glynda Goodwitch gently. With a heavy sigh, he replaced them inside of his jacket and continued to stare out when a young voice interrupted his thoughts. "Is something wrong, Sir?" Turning around, Ozpin smiled lightly at the dark skinned woman with bright blue eyes. Her blue beret off the side of her head, hiding most of her dark hair. The golden symbol impeded in the middle of her forehead and her arms were covered in long, fingerless gloves that reached past her elbows. She held a large scroll in front of with one blue gloved hand and a mug of coffee in the other.

"No, but thank you, Miss Soleil. Your concern is appreciated" He said as he accepted the mug and took a careful sip of the dark contents.

"Of course, Sir" Ciel said as she looked down at the scroll. "Were you successful in contacting Ruby Rose?" She asked gently.

"Yes, but unfortunately I think Salam has been monitoring the members of Team RWBY more closely than we thought. It's best not to risk anymore dreams with them" He said as he turned to face her as she nodded.

"Of course, sir. I also have news from our contacts in Mistral" She started as she tapped away on the scroll, he simply nodded for her to continue. "Black Fang is ready to move on the target. Emerald and Neo made contact with Yang Xiao Long and are making their way to your contact in the town of Jade. Blake Belladonna has acquired the item from Polendina Robotics and Weiss Schnee is back in Atlas, as per General Ironwood's orders" She read off the reports of her scroll as Ozpin made his way around the small house and sat back down in his seat and sipped his drink.

"Good, when Miss Belladonna makes contact with the Black Fang contact, give the go-ahead for that mission" With a nod from the young woman, she tapped away on the scroll then looked up at him slowly.

"Sir, if you don't mind me asking; Why are you moving everyone in this way?" She asked. "With how much power you have, it would be easy to collect everyone and formulate a plan to end this war and save more people otherwise"

Ozpin nodded as he sipped his drink, taking the time to gather his thoughts. "Because, Ceil. We must be subtle with our influence over this war, if we do things right, they won't think we've done anything at all" He looked over at her and smiled softly. "After all, the right person in the wrong place can make all the difference in the world."
Holy shit, it is harder than I thought to juggle all of my stories and try and keep an
update rate at a constant level, but I'm doing my best to keep up with the stories.

Also, my luck sucks. I saw the new Cinder look and had to put it in my last chapter,
the day after I posted it, I got to watch the first episode and found out that Cinder can
barely talk. Damn it all. Oh well, that's where the cannon divergence tag comes in to
help. And I can't wait to start adding in the other new baddies from Vol.4. Something
about Tyrian just makes him perfect for my story, I just need to find a place to write
him in.

As well, if this story had a theme song, I think it would be War by Sum41 from the
Album 13 Voices. (New album, holy shit I remember listening to these guys back in
grade 5)

And thank you to everyone who has left comments and Kudos, I think I was kinda late
but we hit over 100 kudos. This means so much to me to know that so many people
are enjoying this for one reason or another.

If you enjoyed, please leave a kudo if you haven't already. If you have, a comment
with a review would be loved, and as always, thank you for taking the time out of your
busy days to read my little slice of madness.
The Shadow Consumed By Darkness Pt: III

Chapter Notes

All aboard the feels train!
Woo woo!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Shadow Consumed By Darkness

Pt: III

For a single brief second, Blake Belladonna was weightless. In that moment of clarity, her mind began to process the massive amount of information that flooded her brain. First, Blake now has a top of the line prosthetic arm for Yang, stolen from probably the best manufacturers of Atlesian tech with the highest grade materials. Second, Penny is still alive, somehow. Blake remembered watching as she was torn into several pieces during the opening moments of the White Fang attack on Vale and Beacon. As she landed on her feet, the sudden chill in the air made her shiver slightly as she looked around.

Blake found herself in the middle of a large, empty town square in the darkness after sundown, a quick look revealed that the buildings were in a state of disrepair and half buried under permanent snow drifts that only came from deep in the emptiness of Atlas. Gripping the case with Yang's new arm, she made her way towards the closest building when she saw a faint glow of fire inside of another building nearby. Pulling her weapon to the ready, she slowly walked towards the glow.

Walking through an empty doorway, the door itself laying nearby, half buried under snow, Blake took careful, silent steps towards the glowing area to find a small camp fire already started. A few filing cabinets were overturned and were spaced out around the flame. Next to one of the cabinets was a pack that was already opened and a few blades of some sort of sword were sitting out in the open.

Stepping towards the flame, she swung her weapon around, quickly checking the corners and shadows of the room before she lowered Gambol Shroud slowly. "Do you have it?" A strong, female voice echoed through the cold. Blake turned behind her and pointed the handgun form of her weapon at the woman who began to walk towards her slowly. It was the same woman that forced her to teleport from Vale to Vacuo, through the same portal she used to get from the building in the heart of Atlas to the endless cold of its wilderness.

The woman was wearing the black and red kimono top and the low cut black skirt. Various beads graced her neck just below the bright white, angry Nevermore mask with intricate red lines she wore last time. At her hip, a banner of black feathers hung from her right hip and touched the tip of her thigh high boots, more hung from her black hair. In her hands, she carried her long, red blade and in her off hand was the scabbard containing several more multi-coloured blades for her. With a flick of her wrist, the long blade slipped inside of itself and she sheathed it with a click. Blake lowered her weapon and narrowed her eyes at her, she lifted and set the case she was carrying on a
"I'm assuming I was supposed to get an artificial arm for Yang?" Blake asked as she set the case down, but not out of arm's reach. The woman simply nodded as she walked up to her and Blake quickly pulled the case off and held it close to her side. She was never going to let it out of her sight, not if Yang was going to forgive her. The woman stared at her from behind her mask and shook her head lightly.

"I'm not going to take if from you." She said gently. "I just want to make sure it's exactly what she needs" Hesitantly, set the case back down and thumbed the buttons that held it closed. Lifting the top, she revealed the contents to the masked woman. In the gentle glow of the small fire, the polished metal in the arm shined lightly, the dust infused black carbon fibre glowed gently. The arm was stuck inside the foam that was cut out perfectly to hold it as well as a small, leather bound journal and components to ensure that it was mounted upon the person securely and correctly.

The woman looked it over and nodded simply, Blake quickly closed and locked the case in case something happened. Holding it at her side, the woman walked away from Blake and stood next to the fire. "You will be leaving for Mistral on the morrow," The woman said simply as she set her large weapon down and picked up the blades she had set out previously and began to slide them into place. "There is a dust smuggler twenty kilometres to the east, he has a ship and already been paid to take you. You will refer to yourself as. That will get you on"

As the woman began to leave, Blake stepped in front of her. "I need answers," She said simply. "Who are you, why does Ozpin think that I can do this on my own? and if you can just teleport with a portal, why don't you just send me to Mistral instead?" There were several more questions that burned in the back of Blake's mind, but those were a good place to start. The woman just stared at her from behind her mask, her shoulders suddenly drooped slightly, almost like a sigh. Turning around, she began to set her weapon on the make shift bench and began to undo the straps of her dark red gauntlets.

"You are not the only one trying to reunite team RWBY" She began as she opened the side of her weapon and Blake could see the dozens of different blades it had inside of itself. "My bother and other key members are all working in the darkness to bring you together without rousing the suspicion of the one who made this world like this" Pulling out a small, oil filled rag, she began to clean parts as she continued on.

"And in case you haven't noticed, my portals are not the most subtle things in the world. By using a very specific combination of Dust, I can travel further than I usually do. However, I leave traces that can easily be followed if a certain person looks hard enough" She closed the weapon case and began to reach for her mask. "As for who I am” she trailed as she pulled the mask off and set it down next to her weapon. Her back facing Blake as she positioned the mask so it was staring at her, the woman took a deep breath and slowly turned around.

Blake's heart exploded in a second when she saw the face of the woman. For one, blissful moment, she thought Yang was standing in front of her. She looked exactly like her, the same curve of her chin, the way her cheeks filled out her youthful face, her bright, wide eyes stared at her. For a few seconds, Blake stared at Yang, but as she looked at each of her features, more things she found wrong with them.

Yang's eyes were a beautiful lilac, but the woman's were a deep crimson. Yang's beautiful hair was like silken gold, the woman who stood before her had hair like a woven, starless night. They both had the same, adorable bit of hair that refused to flow with the rest and stick up at the top of their
heads, it was that moment she realised that this was not Yang Xiao Long, but someone who looks nearly exactly like her. "I am Raven Branwen." She said as crimson met amber. "Yang's biological mother"

"Summer wasn't the first love he lost; she was the second," Yang told her. "The first... was my mom."

Yang's voice echoed through Blake's mind as she stared at the woman, Yang's birth mother. All of her emotions rushed through her body all at once, the largest being anger. Anger for a woman she had never met before; anger for the person that was supposed to be a mother to another, only to abandon her before she could even think about watching her grow up. Blake slowly bared her teeth at the woman, her hand gripped the handle of Gambol Shroud tightly as she tried to think of a way to drag her back to Yang by herself. If the arm wouldn't grant her forgiveness, her mother surely would.

Raven must have sensed the hostility coming from Blake because she reached back slowly, gripping the handle of her own weapon and narrowed her eyes. "Don't even think about it" She warned. "I know why you're angry at me, but fighting me won't do any good" Her rage hit a boiling point and she lashed out, the blade of her weapon folding out as it arched in a slash towards her. In a flash of martial skill, Raven drew her sword blocked the sudden attack, her dark red blade extending to its full length. A flash of sparks as metal met metal jumped between them as Blake leaned in and put pressure on her, leaning in so she could stare into her eyes.

"How could you!" Blake hissed as the blades shifted and scraped against each other, each pushing against the other. "You left her. You abandoned her before she even knew who you were!" Raven pushed her off and blocked another attack that came in the form of the clever sheath of housed Gambol Shroud when she travelled. Blake had to release the case to draw it out, it fell with a heavy thud, but she had faith in the foam and the metal of the case to protect the arm it housed. Blake charged Raven with a flurry of slashes from weapons in both her hands, Raven blocked each attack with a quick block of her sword.

"She searched for you! She almost died trying to find you!" Blake screamed out as the other woman slashed out, only to cut one of her shadows in half, Blake emerged from the side and used another shadow to launch her up into the air and descend down with a heavy, overhead slash. More sparks filled the room as the fight continued, Blake continually pushing the offensive with her weapons and shadows. Their blades echoing throughout the abandoned building.

Raven's blade came down hard and Blake was pushed back a few feet. "Do you think I don't know that?" She asked dangerously. Blake tensed up to sprint at the woman once more. Suddenly, Raven crouched down and went to slash out with a horizontal strike, Blake got ready to block it when nearly the full length of the sword disappeared into one of her portals, only on the other side of Blake's body. The blade shot out from her right side and caused her to trip and slide across the room. Before she could get to her feet, the long red blade slipped past her throat and into the ground, a boot stomped down next to her as dark red eyes stared deep holes into her soul.

With her blade just an inch away from her throat and her foot on the other side of her head, Blake stayed still and released her grip on her weapons. "I know Yang tried to find me, but I needed to stay hidden, lest they find her when no one could protect her" She pulled the blade from the stone and began to walk away, a scowl on her face. "I did the best I could for her. I left her in the hands of someone who could raise her with what I could never give her. I just wish Taiyang had never told her about me" Raven said the last part quietly as she slid the blade back into the revolving sheath.
Blake slowly got to her feet and watched her. "Why couldn't you be there for her?"

The red eyed woman was silent for a few moments before turning back to face her. "There are people in this world who have been hunting me down for a long time. It was just after Yang was born, I inherited something that they wanted. So, to protect her and those I considered my loved ones, I had to run" Blake could see the sorrow in her eyes. "I asked Summer to take care of her, but deep down I knew that she could be a better mother than I ever could be"

Even with the hard scowl she wore, Raven was blinking rapidly as she took deep breaths. "But don't you think for a second that I didn't love my daughter. What I did was out of love for her, her father, my partner and my brother" She cut her arm through the air to get her point across. "I sacrificed a future with a family I loved, to make sure nothing could hurt them"

"But you still left her!" Blake cried out. "She still hasn't healed from that hole in her heart! She still searched for you after so many years"

"That's rich, coming from you" Raven scoffed as she tilted her head lightly. "Blake Belladonna. The girl who ran away" Blake flinched slightly as she spoke. "You couldn't handle the arguments you had with your parents, so you ran and joined the White Fang" Shame filled Blake, she looked at the ground and fought against the tide of tears that threatened to spill over as she remembered the last time she had talked to her parents back in her hometown in Menagerie.

Blake had just returned home late at night to her waiting parents, they argued that her friends were a bad influence on her and that joining the White Fang would only end in sorrow. That change would come one day, but they could not force it. Blake was young and impulsive then, she screamed at them, called them cowards and ran away. That night she left Menagerie and went to Vale. That was the first day she met Adam, that was the first day that her life had changed for the better and the worse.

"When the White Fang changed into what they are now, you couldn't handle it. So again, you ran" She could not deny her words because they were fact. It was because of Adam and the new direction of the White Fang was going, that in the same year she turned sixteen, she had blood on her hands. "And when you couldn't handle Yang's new disability, you ran away from her as well" She couldn't stop the tears now, they gently ran down her cheeks and dropped onto the cold stone floor, but she was wrong with this last one.

"I didn't run because I was afraid!" Blake yelled. "I left to protect her! Adam would have hunted her down to get to me! I needed to find him before he could hurt her anymore!"

"So you left her to protect her?" Raven asked with a knowing eyebrow raise. Before Blake could reply, the realisation hit her and took her words out of her mouth. She had just said the same thing Raven had said. She left Yang, abandoned her, in order to protect her. She was the exact same as Raven, the same person who was first to abandon her, she just left without saying a word. Just as she had. A fresh wave of shame came over her, and all the fire in her soul vanished in that instant.

Her shoulders sagged and she stared down at the ground as tears left her eyes and rolled down her chin. Blake was no better, she was just as bad, maybe worse. "Isn't funny?" Raven asked after a few moments of silence. Her voice softer than it was before, she looked up through blurry eyes and saw red eyes soften with remorse. "We hurt the ones we love, claiming it's for their protection"

Silence fell in the room. Slowly, Blake grabbed her weapons off the ground and stowed them away before lifting the case with Yang's arm inside and setting it next to the fire before taking a seat and burying her face into her hands. "We're terrible people, aren't we" She managed in a quiet voice. Across from her, Raven took a seat and threw another log into the small campfire they were sitting
around to keep the room the room they were inside warmer.

"So many people have abandoned her, she doesn't deserve this much pain" Raven nodded simply as she picked up her mask and stared into its face. The two women were silent for a long time before Raven stood up and donned the Nevermore mask once more.

"Travel eastward, get on the boat, and get to Mistral," Raven said simply as she picked up her weapon and armour, then began to walk away.

"Why Mistral?" Blake asked. "If Yang's in Patch, why am I going there?"

"Because, if everything goes according to Ozpin's plan, she won't be there anymore," Raven said as she reached to the dark green canvas bag and set it next to the cat faunus. "Mistral is the only kingdom right now who can perform the operation for Yang's arm outside of Atlas" Looking into the pack, Blake saw several ready to eat military rations, extra rounds for her weapon as well as a few bundles of Lien cards.

Looking up, she saw Raven walking to the end of the room and drew her blade to slash her way through reality. "There is another battle coming, Blake. And if we are to fight back the darkness this time, we all need to be ready to do what needs to be done" She swung her blade another black and red portal opened up. "I will meet you in Mistral, when you get there, be prepared. Blood will be spilt to make way for the light" Before Blake could ask what she meant, Yang's mother stepped into the portal.

With a shuddering breath, she pulled out a meal ration and read the instructions on it before squeezing the heat packet in the middle and shaking it to heat it up. She pulled her jacket closer around herself and tried to put in the effort to sleep through the night. It was a long way to the boat Raven told her to take. Eating a miserable meal, she threw another bit of wood into the fire and stayed as close as she could before closing her eyes and drifting off into a light sleep, dreaming of a woman with golden hair and lilac eyes.

As the morning sun came over the small island community of Patch, a red and black portal opened up in the middle of the forest. Raven walked out as it closed behind her, she slid the blade back into its home and began to calmly walk down a forgotten path slowly. Stopping at one tree, without looking at it, she slowly reached her hand up and began to trace the lines carved into the bark there. She knew it well, a simple knife had carved two sets of initials into the dark wood. "RB+TXL" A heart surrounded the letters. She remembered the day he did that for her, it was cheesy and completely cliche, but she had never felt more loved on that day than any other. As much as she would prefer the idea of Yang being conceived in their home, under the warm sheets next to a man who radiated heat like a roaring fire. She knew that deep down, it was that day, in the middle of the woods that Yang's life began.

Her arm fell to her side as she walked away from that tree, her feet carried her down a path that ended at a clearing that opened up to the back of a large wooden house. Her old home, before she was forced to run. Walking up to a stump, she slipped the mask off and set it down gently next to her weapon. Walking up to the back door, the opened the glass door slowly and entered gently.

Looking around, she could see that someone had ransacked the place. All the drawers and cupboards in the kitchen were opened and their contents were thrown all over the place. Making her way through the mess, careful not to step on anything important, she made her way to the living room where more things were scattered around. Seeing a familiar picture, she reached down carefully and picked up the broken frame and gently slide the picture out. Dropping the shattered
frame, she studied the picture carefully, but she already knew what it was, because she was the one who took it.

The picture was a young Taiyang sitting in a rocking chair asleep, in his arms was a tiny little human wrapping in dark orange blankets, a patch of brilliant blonde hair coming out the top. A small, sad smile formed on her lips as she remembered that day. This was the third day of having baby Yang and she had woken up at three thirty in the morning, crying like only a baby could. Taiyang simply leaned over and kissed her cheek, saying that it was his turn, Raven never questioned it and fell back asleep. A few hours later, she woke up to find her bed devoid of her favourite heat source.

She quietly sneaked into the baby's nursery and smiled at the scene she stumbled across. A sleeping father, gently snoring away as a sleeping baby lay in his arms. The new mother quickly left the room and returned with a camera in her hands and took the picture with a smile. She then picked her child up out of his arms and laid her down in her bed before rousing her father with gentle kisses until he opened his eyes.

It was later that month when she inherited the Maiden's power, she was so afraid. She went to the only person she thought who would have an idea what was happening to her with her brother, the headmaster of Beacon Academy, Ozpin. It was there they learned about the truth to her new strength. It was there they learned the truth about the world and of the secret war that had been waged since the beginning of legends and it was him that told her she needed to go into hiding, or those who were hunting down the maidens would try and attack her family to draw her out.

Raven blinked tears out of her eyes as she folded the old picture and shoved it into a pocket inside of her shirt. Her eyes traced the railing of the stairs, being driven by memory, Raven walked up and stood before the first step. Looking up at the second floor, her hand gently traced the varnished wood of the railing before taking the first step. It was almost like she had come home from a long day, she could almost pretend that the last twenty-one years never happened, and she was returning with groceries in her arms, anxious to return to her lover and child.

She stepped on the third last step and it creaked loudly, she stopped and shook her head with a small smile. "He said he would fix that" She whispered to herself. "Stupid man..." Reaching the landing, she took a left turn and walked past the nursery and saw two large beds facing each other. Shelves and belongings were scattered and thrown across the room, further down was the guest room, more of the carnage could be seen.

She reached the master bedroom and walked inside slowly. A thick layer of dust over everything, a bed that hadn't been slept in for years and Taiyang's things thrown across the floor. She closed her eyes and could almost smell the man, no matter how many showers he took, he always smelled like a campfire, but it was never a bad smell. She walked over to the bed and slowly sat down on her side, her hand gently stroked the other side where he would have slept. More tears welled behind her eyes and gently slipped down her cheeks as another memory came into her brain too fast for her to stop it.

"You're leaving, Aren't you?" Raven looked back from the closet to find Summer Rose standing in her bedroom. She was wearing her dark clothing and bright white cloak, her silver eyes stared into her red ones with a small sad smile on her lips. Raven slowly stood up from the pack she had been shoving clothing into and stayed silent for a moment.

"I'm sorry, Summer" Raven choked out as she shoved one last shirt into the overfilled back and slung it over her shoulder. "But I have to" Raven walked up to Summer and looked into her eyes, she needed to be strong, but this woman made it so easy to just become nothing but a stuffed toy.
"Take care of the big oaf and my Sunshine, will you?" Summer gently smiled and nodded lightly.

"Are you going to say goodbye to her?"

Tears began to freely flow from her crimson eyes now. "No. I can't. I'm sorry, Summer. I just can't-" The woman simply shushed her and gently wiped the tears from her eyes before pulling her into a warm and loving hug. If Raven went to say goodbye to her daughter, she would never be able to leave.

"It's okay, Raven. I understand" She whispered to her. "I'll help Tai out the best I can. Qrow is always on call to babysit since he's the uncle now anyways" Raven let out a choked laugh and nodded as she let her pack fall from her shoulder and squeezed the woman as hard as she could. "I love you, Raven. You're the best friend I ever had. You're like a sister to me"

"I love you too, Summer" When Raven pulled away, she could see tears falling from Summer Rose's eyes as she sniffed softly.

"Now go before I stop you"

With a nod, Raven quickly grabbed her pack and stormed out of her bedroom, leaving behind a crying woman. Running down the stairs, she froze at the door when she heard a cry coming from upstairs. It was Yang, she knew that her mother was leaving. She was only her mother for a month, and she already knew that she was never going to see her again. Gritting her teeth, Raven waited just long enough to hear Summer to enter the nursery and began to calm her daughter down before she pried the door open with far more strength than necessary and sprinted down the path. Drawing her sword with one hand, she opened a portal to anywhere and jumped through, never to look back.

Shaking her head of the memory, she wiped her face of the tears she shed and looked out the window, she had one last place to visit before leaving her home again.

Walking out of the house, she collected her mask and weapon before she made her way down a path that brought her to the cliff. It was here that Taiyang first said 'I love you'. It was this cliff they shared their first kiss. It was this cliff that her best friend and her lover were immortalised by gravestones. Standing before the two grey stones, she didn't bother wiping the tears that fell from her face now.

"Only in death, do we achieve immortality" Raven spoke softly as she looked out to the endless forest before her. "I'm sorry, Tai. I did my best to protect her without giving myself away, but I couldn't get there in time to stop that man. I couldn't be here for her as you tried to help her recover" Raven looked over to the other gravestone and spoke to her friend.

"Summer, I'm sorry I had to force this onto you, but you raised Yang to be such a beautiful woman and I don't think I could have done any better" She sniffed hard and wiped her cheeks clear of tears only for them to come back. "I'm sorry I wasn't there for you either of you. You two were my family, the few people I loved and I couldn't do anything to save either one of you and I'm so sorry for that" She took a shaky breath and calmed herself down just a little bit.

"And I hope you'll find it in your hearts to forgive me when I meet you again at the end of this" Setting her weapon and mask down, she reached inside of her pouch and pulled out two roses, one a pure beautiful white, the other was a brilliant yellow. She gripped the flowers and ripped the stems off and waited a few moments for a gust of wind push past her, blowing her midnight hair past her.
When it did, she reached out and released the rose petals into the wind and let them scatter to the
forest below. She watched the petals fly and flutter down, she could see Summer and Taiyang
dancing softly in the colourful storm. when she couldn't see the colours anymore she pulled her
weapon to her side and put her mask on softly. Slashing a portal into existence, and with her last
goodbyes said, she left her home one more time.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry it was a bit of a longer chapter this time around, I kinda lost track of how much I
was writing and before I knew it, I had all of this. Hopefully its not too much for you
guys. I actually cried a little bit writing this chapter, doesn't help I was listening to sad
music (Dead man's eyes by Apocalyptica from the album Shadow Maker)

Side not, I love depressing music.

So if you enjoyed it, please leave a Kudo if you haven't already. If you have, leave a
comment! I love reading what you guys think of the chapters and of the story overall, I
want to hear all of it! Any and all feedback is welcome, and as always thank you for
taking the time out of your busy days to read my little slice of madness.
A soft poke stirred Yang from her sleep. The first sensation that flooded her system was a
warmness that came from sleeping in just a little bit longer, the next sensation was the jarring
headache that shook her to her core. A groan left her lips as she reached up and gripped her face
lightly, trying to tether herself to reality. Another poke to her cheek. Slowly, violet eyes opened
gently to see a world turned on its side, directly in front of her was a set of mismatched eyes, one
bright pink while the other was a ghostly white.

A small, sleepy smile on Neopolitan's face, her chocolate and strawberry hair falling over her
shoulders and down her body pooling onto the ground in front of her neck. Her hand came out once
more and she pressed her finger into Yang's cheek again, making the blonde groan out again. "I'm
up..." She said with a rough voice. Neo's shoulders and chest moved gently, a giggle, as Neo sat up
slowly and got to her feet. Yang let out a sigh and sat up slowly and watched as Neo walked over to
Emerald, who was sleeping in the other sleeping bag on the other side of a dead fire pit.

While Yang did not enjoy the way Neo usually woke her up from her watches, with the
affectionate pokes and touching until she stirred, she liked them better than Emerald's way of
waking her up. A loud voice and swift kick to her leg, making an already irritable, sober Yang,
even more so. Yang rubbed the sleep from her eyes before holding her hand to her mouth to cover a
yawn. The sun was already up and the wildlife was carrying on all around them. Looking down at
her hand, she saw how it shook gently and gritted her teeth slowly. It had been four days since her
last drop of alcohol and she was feeling the effects of withdrawal hard.

Her headache had never stopped, she always had a quick temper, but now it was on a hairline
trigger, the littlest thing set her off, and it was usually Emerald who pulled the trigger. It was the
smallest things too, a glance here, a simple comment there, and Yang would just go off. A
screaming match would quickly become a fist fight if little Neo hadn't always been there to diffuse
the situation. The shaking had only started yesterday, three years of nothing but various whiskeys
and liqueurs with bare minimum solid foods was catching up to her now.

Watching Neo lean over and shake Emerald into consciousness brought forth a strange feeling for
the diminutive woman. While she knew that Neo had not only tried to kill her, but also her sister.
She was partnered with Roman Torchwick, notorious criminal mastermind who was working for
Cinder Fall, the woman who pulled the strings behind everything that happened at Beacon and
Vale. Because of them, they destroyed her school, her home and set up the stage for her arm to be taken away. But deep down, somewhere in her heart, she liked having Neo so close and affectionate towards her. Even if it's just a small crush or a passing relationship, it felt nice to be around someone like that.

It felt good to be wanted.

Yang pushed the dark thoughts of a certain black haired beauty from her mind as she got out of the bag and stood up slowly, stretching her back and arm as another stemmed from her mouth. The morning routine began as the two other women began to roll up the sleeping bags tight enough to be packed up once more. Since it was next to impossible for Yang to do that task, she made her useful in other ways by gathering up the other things of their campsite. Any garbage they may have made and gathering enough small wood chunks to start their next fire with.

In a few minutes, their camp was cleaned, dismantled and hidden the best they can to stop Mercury from tracking them down quickly. Emerald and Neo each took one of the packs and Yang hauled the large black duffle back onto her one shoulder. A few days prior, Neo took them to a seemingly dead tree trunk and pulled out the large bag from a hole under it. Inside was several hundred thousand lien in neat little bundles, a couple of handguns and a few boxes of ammo as well as several Airship tickets to various cities all over Remnant, her and Roman's payment for their role at Vale.

Emerald handed her another ration pack and she sighed. Thanking the dark skinned woman, she read the pack and saw that it said 'breakfast' on the side, gripping the tear tab with her teeth, she opened it up and peered inside. It was some kind of cereal coated in a fine white dust. Powdered milk, she figured. "Most important meal of the day" Emerald said drily as she walked past. Instead of pouring the recommended amount of water into the pack, she decided just to eat it dry by pouring the pack directly into her mouth.

"So" Yang began with a mouth full of dry corn flakes. "Where exactly are we going?" They had been travelling for almost a week now, and Yang hand no idea what the plan actually was. All she knew was they Emerald and Neo saved her from Mercury and now they were walking through a forest, heading eastward.

"We're heading to a town called Jade. We're looking for someone named Crew" She said as they walked between impossibly high trees. Yang just nodded and they continued their silent walk, Emerald leading them with Neo int he middle, staying closer to Yang.

It was well into the evening by the time they made it to the down, the sun was beginning to set and they only stopped for a few breaks, making Yang even more tired and agitated, she felt a little better when Neo helped her tie her hair up into a loose ponytail. Jade was a fairly large town, the market place was already closed by the time they got there, but judging by the size of the square and the amount of stalls there were, she assumed lots of business comes in and out of there. It was another hour of checking the three separate inns in the town when Emerald sighed and threw her arms up in defeat.

"How the hell are we supposed to find this guy?!" She steamed out. They were sitting on a bench in front of a small fountain dedicated to some dead guy from fifty years ago. "We've checked everywhere this asshole would sleep and no one has seen him. Who the hell spells their name with a 'Q' without the 'U' anyways..." Emerald said as she pulled a piece of paper from her small leather jacket and checked the name again.

Something clicked in Yang's mind as she stood up from her seat, setting the bag down next to Neo, who was busy looking at herself in a compact mirror, trying on different shades of eyes. Right
now, she had deep green on, a blink and they were almost pitch black. "Let me see" Yang said as she held her hand out. Emerald shrugged and placed the paper in her hand and flopped onto the bench next to Neo and gently rubbed her legs. Lilac eyes scanned over the four letter word that was scribbled onto the wrinkled and creased piece of paper. 'Qrow' Yang sighed and handed the paper back. "Its not 'Crew' Its 'Crow'" She said simply as she began to look around for something.

"Wait, you know him?" Emerald asked as she looked at the paper and tilted her head slightly. Yang simply nodded as she continued to scan the streets around them for a sign. "You know where he is?" She asked as Neo took the paper from her and tilted her head even more, turning the paper to try and make sense of it.

"I know what he likes" She said simply as she found what she was looking for. "Cheap booze and cheaper girls" The blonde brawler began to walk down the street, making Emerald and Neo to pick up the packs and the large black bag and quickly chased after her. Soon, the three woman were standing in front of a large neon sign that read simply. "The Three Bears" Below it, it advertised 'live entertainment' and Yang knew that this was the place where she could find him. Walking up to the door, a large man in a black shirt and red hat simply looked at them and raised an eyebrow at them before leaning over and opened the door for them without a sound.

"Must be a slow night..." Yang mumbled as they walked straight they got past the coat check, where they stashed their packs, they were hit with a wave of heat, sweat and booze and a beat that made her headache even worse than it was, but at least she could finally get a drink. Looking around, she could see a several stages around a large dance floor where the 'live entertainment' performed. Woman in tiny shreds of clothing or nothing at all.

Each of them were moving their bodies to the beat of the music, each of them a were decent looking, the lights and the way they moved their bodies made them look better than they probably were. Her eyes continued to scan until she caught a familiar red cloak resting on the shoulders of a man sitting at the bar.

Making her way to the man, he was wearing a long tailed grey shirt with the sleeves rolled up just before his elbows. Black pants that look liked they had been slept in for three weeks straight. His greying dark hair and a thick stubble made him look even older than he was. The bartender just set a tumbler in front of him, filled with something she didn't know, not that she cared.

Just as he was about to each for it, Yang snatched it out of his reach and downed it in a single go then slammed the glass down in front of him. Looking over at her, red eyes studied her for a moment before a small smirk formed on his face. "Hey Firecracker" He said in his deep voice as he picked up the empty glass and inspected it.

"Uncle Qrow" Yang said simply as she dragged her sleeve across her chin, soaking up a little that trailed down her chin.

"Wait," Emerald said she and Neo walked up to them. "This is our contact? And he's your uncle? " She asked pointing to the man in question. Her uncle looked over and raised his dark eyebrow at them and shrugged.

"Well, if it isn't the 'acquired assets'" He said with more than a little slur in his voice. "Here I was half expecting you get yourselves killed getting here..." He waved down the bartender who refilled the glass, only for Yang to grab it before he could again. He raised his eyebrow and nodded to the bartender, who set the bottle on the counter and walked away. "Might want to slow down kiddo..."

"I haven't had a drink in almost a week...I need this" Yang said as she set the glass down again and went to fill it again.
"You need a flask, helps keep the edge off." He said as she took a more careful sip of the drink. She didn't know what it was, it all tended to taste the same to her.

"That's good and all, but It's kinda hard with only one hand," Yang said with a sigh as she sat in the stool next to him and stared at the bottle.

"Here" Qrow said as he reached into his pocket and set a flask down on the bar top. The metal was painted black with a thick band of yellow leather around the middle. In the middle of it was her burning heart imprinted into the leather. She gently ran her thumb over the emblem, she could feel where the press pushed into the material to make the symbol. Her fingers played with the cap, and with a little pressure, it flipped open and she closed it with a snap.

She gave it a light shake and set it down once more. "It was supposed to be your graduation present, but now seems like as good a time as ever to give it to you" He took the bottle and filled the glass for himself. "Sorry this had to happen to you, Kiddo" Yang gritted her teeth slowly as she set the new flask down and looked over at him.

"Oh yeah, sorry is going to bring back everyone who's ever left me..." She said as she grabbed the bottle and took a gulp straight from the bottle.

"Not everyone is gone, Yang." He said softly.

She slammed her fist onto the bar top, denting the wood and sending a web of cracks down the top. Everyone stopped and looked over at them as Yang stood up and stared into his eyes. "EVERYONE IS GONE!" She yelled at him. "MOM! RUBY! BLAKE! EVEN DAD! WERE YOU EVEN AT HIS FUNERAL?" She asked loudly as she pulled her fist out of the bar top and pointed it at him.

"Were you?" He asked gently. "I was there, Yang. But you so drunk off your ass you didn't even recognise me when I stood in front of you. I paid my respects to him while you could barely stand" Yang gritted her teeth, she was about to shout at him again when a large man came up from behind the bar and slammed both palms on the top, stopping any shout she was about to make.

"Hey! Knock it off or I'll kick you out!" The man shouted at them. Yang looked over and recognised the man. "Oh shit..." Junior murmured lightly as he stroked his goatee lightly. "The hell are you doing here, Blondie?" He asked her lightly. His eyes looked over the rest in her little group and settled back onto Yang, his eyes hovering over the knotted sleeve of her right arm. It was only for a second, but she noticed it, she always noticed it.

"Drinking. This is a bar, right?" She said as she poured another glass full and downed it with a jerk of her head.

"Listen, Blondie. I don't wan-" Yang's hand darted out and she grabbed his red tie, yanking him off his feet, she slammed his head onto the bar top and growled at him.

"I thought I told you to call me 'Sir' " She said as she let him get up enough before slamming his head back down. A heavy hand came to her shoulder, looking back, she saw the bouncer out front looking at her with anger in his eyes. Releasing Junior, she put her fist into his gut. Ember Celiea activating and blowing him away into a table, shattering the wood and throwing the drinks onto the ground. That felt good, far too good. People began to get up and rushed to the exits as a number of Junior's goons began to file out of backrooms and looked at her. With a jerk of her arm, she cocked another round into her gauntlet and walked towards the dance floor, now abandoned by the dancers.
Behind her, Emerald and Neo were getting ready to join her when Qrow put his arm out to stop them. "Leave her, she'll be fine..." He said as he continued to drink.

"SHe's outnumbered! We need to do something!" Emerald said as she pulled her weapon out and double checked the rounds inside of them.

"Yeah, they should have brought more..."

Yang watched as two familiar figures began to walk towards her from the crowd of goons. Melanie and Miltia strode towards her in their colour coordinated outfits with feathers on it, they stood before Yang and the two of them gave her a quick up and down before looking at each other. "It's shame to see her like this, Miltia." The white one said with a tilt of her head.

"It is, Melanie." The red one said gently. "I almost feel bad for her"

"Almost..."

Yang narrowed her eyes and bared her teeth at them. She widened her stance and stared at them, ready to punch something. "BRING IT!" She shouted at them. Just before the Malachite twins charged towards her, a loud bang echoed through the club. Everyone stopped what they were doing and all eyes were up on the second floor landing, Yang followed their gazes and saw a very small old lady looking down at them with a very angry look on her face. Slowly, she turned and began to walk down the steps to the main dance floor.

She was dressed in a dark brown loose tai-chi uniform with four buttons going down the middle. Matching loose pants with thin slippers on her feet. Her dark grey hair was done up in a tight bun and she had a long, thin pip in her hand, a small trail of smoke coming from the tip. Deep wrinkles were set in her forehead and mouth as she made her way down towards her. Behind her, a tall bald man was following her every step, he was dressed in a similar outfit but in all black with small round, dark glasses covering his eyes. In one of his hands were a small wooden box and a sword in the other.

When she made it to the dance floor, the man behind her waved his arm and the pounding music was killed instantly and the lights came on. The twins quickly flanked the elderly woman's sides and bowed their head respectfully as Junior stumbled towards her. "Ma'am" He said with heavy breaths. "This is the one I was-" Her hand darted out and grabbed his tie and forced him onto his knees to her side so he had to look up to her. Yang watched silently as she didn't even turn her head to look at him, just a shift in her almond shaped eyes at him. He bowed his head respectfully and nodded. "Sorry. Ma'am" When she released his tie, she took a breath from her pipe and nodded for him to continue. "Ma'am. This was the woman I was telling you about, the one who destroyed the club back in Vale" The woman simply looked back at Yang and took her in with another inhale of her pipe.

"You mean to tell me" Her voice old but strong, she pronounced each syllable deliberately. "That this, one armed woman, beat you and your girls?" She asked with a raised eyebrow.

"She wasn't missing an arm before..." He said quietly.

Yang just sighed as she ran a hand through her hair and looked at the woman as she turned her attention back to Yang. "Who are you?" She asked simply. Yang looked around at the people who were gathered on the dance floor, looking back, she saw Emerald and Neo, ready to jump in at a moment's notice, her uncle finishing off the bottle that was left.
"I am Yang Xiao Long," She said simply. The woman examined her thoughtfully as she drew another breath through her thin pipe. When her mind was made up, she spoke finally.

"You lie, Yang Xiao Long" The way she said her name, each word clipped on her lips, infuriated her.

"What?"

"You lie" She repeated simply.

"You don't think I know who I am?" She asked with a confused look. Of course she knew who she was, it was her name since she was born.

"You are confused about who you are" She said simply as she turned and handed the pipe to the man, who took it with a bow and slipped the pipe into the box he was holding. The woman slipped her hands into the sleeves of her outfit before continuing. "I know who I am. I am He Si Xiong. I own this town and leader of our little organisation." She said as her small eyes fell onto her. "You, are not Yang Xiao Long. You are a wounded girl. Crying and screaming at the world. Drowning yourself in the sins of the world instead of standing above them" Yang gritted her teeth and stared at the woman, He Si, and shook her head.

"You don't know anything about me..." She warned dangerously.

"I know you are damaged, and the ones who hurt you the most did not wield a sword but a needle." At that, Yang gripped her jacket and tore it off her shoulders. Tossing it behind her off the dance floor, she took up another position and narrowed her eyes at the woman, the blonde's orange top stained with blood as the stub of her arm was bare for all to see.

"You want to go, Bitch!?" She cried out. Anger, adrenaline and alcohol pumped through her blood. Her heart beating loudly in her ears as the woman simply took her hands out of her sleeves and reached back. The man behind her placed the handle of her sword in her hand and pulled away, arming the woman. In her hand, she inspected an impossible thing blade, a small guard and a small green tassel at the end of the handle. She lifted it up and the sword wiggled gently in her hand as she took a position and gently ran two fingers along the flat of the blade.

She threw the blade up and it froze in a ready position, slowly a figure began to form around her, a phantom person with a brown glow was holding her blade for her, but matched the movements of the woman herself. While she was well under five feet tall, the glowing person she stood inside was almost six feet tall, she couldn't make out many details of the face, but it looked a lot like the woman. The woman moved her arms and the figure moved exactly the same, she then charge towards Yang, blade first.

Her blade was fast, it sung through the air as the figure followed the movements and struck her hard with flat of the blade, sending Yang sliding to the ground. She got up quickly and charged towards her, yelling as she did so. The blade came down and Yang blocked the sword, the yellow of her gauntlet was scraped off as she threw her arm out and brought her right foot up, connecting with the woman's chin. While her father died shortly after the war began, he managed to teach her a few new moves that relied on counters and her legs to help make up for lack of arm.

The woman flew through the air and was about to land on her back when she suddenly floated across the floor and up, landing softly on her feet. She took up a stance and waited for Yang to come to her. She swung her arm behind her and activated her weapon and sent her flying towards the woman in a spiral. Her left heel came down and was blocked by the glowing phantom arm as the blade came down and smacked her across the face, sending her reeling and against a pillar,
sending a spider web of cracks up the material.

Neo and Emerald watched the fight continue, Yang launching herself off the pillar and charging the woman, her brute strength was a hard match against her technique. Neo was wringing her hands together, desperate to help Yang out but knowing that she would only snap at her and do more harm than good. She looked up at Emerald and she had the same kind of look, one wanting to help, but knowing she could not.

Emerald looked over at Qrow and saw him playing with the crooked cross necklace nervously as Yang connected and sent the woman flying, but once again she floated across the floor and softly landed on the wall, tensed up and shot towards the blonde. Yang reached back and threw her arm down, connecting with her head and sending her into the ground hard. The woman slapped the ground and her whole body was sent spinning onto its feet and swung the blade. The brown phantom glowed brightly for a few moments as the woman moved to wipe the blood off her nose, the phantom doing the same.

Yang twisted her neck and sent loud popping noises echoed through the crowd as He Si swung the blade loosely and tensed up once more. She charged towards Yang as she did the same, her arm shot out in a punch and the woman jumped up and landed on it with ease. Yang watched, wide eyed, as the woman landed on her fist and stood perfectly still. Yang did not even feel her weight as her foot came out and kicked her in the chin with back flip off her arm. Yang felt her semblance ignite and her eyes turned red, her hair flowed out in its loose pony tail as Yang spat out a wad of blood.

The elder simply raised her free hand and flexed her fingers in a 'get over here' gesture. With a yell, Yang stomped the ground and her semblance came out in full effect as she charged towards her. The woman came down with a strike of her sword and Yang's body moved out of habit before she could stop. Her left arm came up and blocked the sword while her right came for a body shot, she knew nothing was going to happen, she figured she would use what momentum it made and try for a kick when she felt something connect and a bright orange flash happened against her chest. The woman stumbled back, holding her chest and staring at Yang wide eyed.

Looking down to where her fist would be, she saw nothing. It was gone. Been gone for nearly four years now, but she felt her fist connect to the woman's chest. Looking up at her, she looked just as confused as she was. After a few moments, the woman relaxed slightly as her phantom began to fade away, grabbed the blade from the air and reversed her grip the handle and pressed metal against the inside of her arm.

"Enough," She said as she walked towards Yang slowly. Taking deep breaths, Yang slowly relaxed and watched her carefully. "You truly do not know someone, until you fight them." She said simply as she walked towards the tall man and sheathed the weapon slowly. "Tell me, Yang Xiao Long. What do you hope to accomplish with all of your anger and fury?" She asked as she turned towards the blonde.

Yang was silent for a few moments, trying to think of an answer for her. What did she want? "I want-" She took a breath as she looked up at the woman as she took her pipe back, the bald man stroke a long match and placed it inside the end of the pipe to light whatever she was smoking. "I want my life back" Yang said finally.

The woman nodded slowly and placed a hand behind her back and stood up straighter. "And what are you going to do to get it back?" She asked quickly. Again, Yang was silent for a few moments before speaking.

"I'm going to take it back from the one who stole it from me" She said finally, the image of Adam
Taurus flashed in her mind. His smirk that haunted her dreams, his voice that sent shivers down her spine. She gritted her teeth lightly as anger began to slip back into her voice. "I'm going to kill the man who did this to me..." Her free hand came up and gripped her stump and squeezed lightly, sending sensation up her shoulder.

The woman nodded slowly and inhaled the pipe, sending out a small cloud of smoke from her lips. "And where is he?" She asked.

"I don't know..." Yang replied quietly.

"Mistral!" Looking back as Uncle Qrow stood up from his bar stool and called out to Yang. "Adam and is band of merry miscreants are heading to Mistral as we speak. I think their getting ready to pull another Vale job" He said as he leaned on the bar and looked at her. "That's what I'm here to tell you, Firecracker," He told her with a nod.

"Then Mistral is where you will go" The woman said as she nodded. "Hei! Get papers ready for Mistral, Four people leaving from the port of Arrow"

Junior looked at her, then back to He Si, then to the rest of Yang's group. "keep my ticket. I got my own way to get there" Qrow said as he placed a few Lien cards on the table and began to leave. "I've got a few things to take care of, so I'll see you there, and be careful Yang, there are still some who love you" He said with a small smile and a two fingered salute before leaving. Yang looked back at Junior and sighed lightly, her semblance dying down slowly.

"Why are you doing this?" Yang asked slowly as she raised an eyebrow and picked up her jacket, she didn't bother putting it on and simply hung it over her shoulder.

"Think of it as payment for giving this old woman the best fight she's had in a number of years" She said with a smile as she began to walk up the stairs. "Oh, and you can take Hei's room tonight, you've earned it" She said simply as she slowly made her way up the stairs, the tall bald man following her silently. "It should be perfect for you"

"Wait, what?" Junior asked as he looked up at the woman. "Where am I supposed to sleep tonight?" He asked lightly.

The woman stopped and looked down at him. "Oh, I don't think you'll be sleeping tonight. You need to clean up the club and get the papers ready for tomorrow morning" She said with a small smile as she continued up to wherever she came from.

"Yes Mama..." Junior sighed heavily as he looked around and gestured to Yang. "Come on..." He said simply as he began to lead her up the set of stairs from earlier. On the second floor, Yang saw a large amount of comfortable chairs and tables where people could sit and relax for meetings or for a more personal form of 'adult entertainment'. She passed a large office where He Si Xiong was sitting and and watching them walk past. Up another set of stairs to the third story where a large penthouse greeted her. "Bed is in the back" He said simply as he pointed her towards the bedroom.

The apartment was nice and spacious, modern furnishing and the entire wall was a large window that looked over the town and the forest that surrounded it. She nodded simply as Junior left her alone. She closed the door and made her way to the bar that was directly to her right. Picking up a bottle, she pulled the top off with her teeth and downed a mouthful before heading to the large, neatly made bed in the back. She threw shrugged her jacket to the ground and was about to sit down when she heard the door click closed. Looking back, Neo was looking at her with a small smile and mischief in her eyes.
"What do you want, Neo," Yang asked with a sigh as she took another drink from the bottle. Neo simply pointed to Yang and mouthed a single word. 'You' Yang just rolled her eyes and sighed as she set the bottle on the nightstand and turned to face the smaller woman. "Leave me alone, Neo..." She said simply with a sigh. Neo simply tilted her head with a rise of her eyebrow and pulled her scroll and began to type something before throwing it to Yang. Catching it, she looked down at it and read what she had written.

"I can be anyone you want me to be"

Looking back up, Neo was no longer standing there. Instead a short, dark haired person was standing before her wearing a nice suit and blue eyes. While her clothing and hair changed, she still retained her feminine features and her face remained the same, but she somehow looked more masculine in her posture. Yang simply shook her head and threw the device onto the phone. "While you do look attractive, I do lean towards the other team..." She said simply. Neo looked off to the side and smirked slightly with a raise of her eyebrow.

She ran her hands down her body and her outfit changed from a nice suit to a white jacket and a white skirt with long, white boots. She ran her hands through her hair and it went from black to white, pulling it to the right side of her head and it became a off centre ponytail. She blinked and her eyes changed to an icy blue, then she dragged a finger down her left eye to create Weiss's signature scar. Jutting her hip to the side, she waited for Yang's response. "Please, like I want the Ice Queen" Yang said as Neo thought about it again.

Her outfit changed again, this time she put on a black and red corset with matching shirt and skirt. She dusted the skirt off and leggings and large boots formed on her legs as her hair was changed from snow white to black with red tips. A blink, and her eyes went to the familiar silver of her sister Ruby. Yang narrowed her eyes at Neo as she gritted her teeth. "You make me sick." Neo gave a dismissive shrug, as she thought once more. With an deep breath, her black and red clothing faded away to turn into a white sleeveless shirt with a black vest. A ribbon wrapped around her one arm, white shorts with black stockings that faded to purple at her ankles.

Short boots finished Blake's outfit as Ruby's red tints faded away to reveal luscious raven locks, a few bats of her eyelashes revealed beautiful amber was still short, but an image of Blake stood before Yang right now. Grinding her teeth, she growled at the woman. "You take her off. Now..." Instead, Neo raised her hands to the top of her head and positioned them carefully. She did a little dance and flexed her fingers to make it look like cat ears, she only did it for a second before Yang lunged at her. The illusion shattered and Neo tripped her easily and threw her over onto the bed where she landed onto her back.

Before she could get up, Neo straddled the top of her chest and held her arm above her head. From her position, Yang did not have enough leverage to force her off of her. Neo had changed back into her usual getup, but her jacket and long heeled boots seemed to have gotten lost somewhere in transition, leaving her in her corset and pants. A small smile played on Neo's lips as she leaned down and let her brown and pink hair cascading down her shoulders tilted her head gently.

Her eyes the usual pink and brown. With her free hand, she gently traced the jawline of the blonde and ran her fingertip down her throat watched as Neo licked her lips slowly and tilted her head gently, trying to decide her angle of attack. Yang could feel heart beating hard in her chest, heat rising to her face slowly. The gentle touches set her skin on fire, she knew what she was doing, that much Yang figured out. Yang couldn't help but to lick her own lips as Neo leaned down slowly and she could feel her breath on her skin.

Slowly, she released Yang's arm and slid down her body, hands began to trace and slide across her
bare skin. She could feel the pressure beginning to build inside of her loins as Neo began to gently pull at the orange top that Yang was wearing. She pulled it off and tossed it to the ground next to the bed before a hand was pressed onto her stomach and began to slide up to her chest. Yang reached out and grabbed Neo's head and pulled her close.

"You. Are. Not. Her" She whispered with panted breaths. The smaller woman's tongue darted out and traced the line up Yang's throat, up her jawline to her ear before nibbling on her ear gently. Yang inhaled sharply as her eyes fluttered closed on their own, her brain fuzzy from the booze and her hormones getting driving her needs. In her ear, Neo whispered to her, it was barely a whisper in the wind, she almost missed it from the way her heart was hammering in her ears, all she heard was a passing voice, just breath moving through her throat.

"I don't have to be"

Neo pulled back just enough and Yang moved in quickly. Pressing her lips against hers in a starved passionate kiss as her arm moved up her side and found string that held the corset together. It popped open under the strain of Neo's surprising bust size. She pulled out of the kiss and pulled the article of clothing off of her body before leaning back down again and kissing her deeply. Her tongue slipping past her lips and tracing the blonde's tongue. Moaning into Neo's mouth, she moved against the smaller woman as her hands began to move down her body, undoing the button of her cargo pants and slowly pushing the zipper down before fingers found their way into the waistband of her boy shorts.

Growling into her mouth, Yang bit down on Neo's lip and pulled slightly. Her hand came down on Yang's chest and forced down back down onto the bed with a small crawled off Yang's body and moved lower down to grip her pants and pulled them off slowly with her shoes, quickly joining the pile of clothing that was getting bigger by the minute. Yang helped her slowly as she undressed the voluptuous woman, the next thing to go was Yang's boy shorts, where a heavy blush formed on Yang's face as she looked away slowly.

A small smile formed on Neo's lips as she forced Yang's legs open a bit more before the brown haired woman moved down between her knees and trailed up her thighs, leaving small bites and kisses in her wake. Yang moaned lowly as her lips slowly traced her sex and placed a small kiss onto her folds. Yang reached up and gripped the sports bra that held her breasts at bay and pulled it over her head, leaving her completely in the nude. A moan left her mouth as Neo's tongue began to trace her lips and Yang's hand began to kneed her own breasts.

Yang opened her eyes when the heat left her sex and looked down her own body at Neo, who began to crawl up her body like a predictor chasing closing in on its some point, Neo lost her pants and whatever she wore under it and straddled Yang's hips. A large, rough hand was placed on Neo's milky thighs and began to trail up her body and cupped her breast in her one hand. Her breast filled the palm of Yang's hand as she squeezed lightly and traced the dark nipple with her thumb.

Neo smiled and tilted her head back, grinding against Yang's hips, she allowed herself to be worked on for a few moments before gently taking her hand and forcing it down her body.

Neo placed Yang's hand between her own thighs and forced her to trace and rub Neo's silky, soaking sex. Yang's fingers ran down her folds and gently slid inside of her gently. Neo's mouth opened and her chest began to rise and lower quickly. Neo's hand began to slip under her and began to trace Yang's folds in a similar way. the two of them began to rub each other gently, pants and moans filling the room as their hands began to work faster and faster. Neo leaned down quickly and her teeth found Yang's skin, biting down on her chest, causing Yang to moan out loudly as her other hand continued to work at Neo's sex.
Each time she bit Yang's skin, her hand would move faster. In turn, Neo's hand moved faster against her. The pressure was reaching a boiling point as she groaned out loudly one more time and her legs tensed up and shook hard as she came undone. Neo rubbing herself faster and faster on her hand as her whole body tensed up and a silent scream left her mouth. Little Neo collapsed on top of Yang, breathing deeply as the two of them basked in the afterglow, breathing deeply and unconsciousness came to her.

It was well past three in the morning when He Si Xiong, Hei 'junior' Xiong's mother, walking up to his desk and looked over the papers Blondie and her friends will need to take them to Mistral. Looking up at his mother, he sighed lightly as he leaned back in his seat. "So, what was that all about?" He asked lightly as he shoved the papers into an envelope and let out a yawn. "I mean, you could have easily taken her out, why did you let her go?" His mother inhaled through the smoking pipe in her mouth, buying her time to think of her words.

"Do you believe in destiny, Hei?" She asked lightly as she sat down in the chair across from him. Junior leaned back in his seat and blinked a few times while rubbing his chin lightly.

Shrugging, he looked at her and sighed. "Maybe? I'm a simple man, Mama. I don't worry myself with such things" The elderly woman nodded as she took a breath and spoke.

"I had a dream, not too long ago. I was a bear, searching for a den so that I can raise my cubs" She began softly, recalling the dream. "When I came upon one den, I looked inside and I saw a great, golden dragon with amethysts for eyes. She roared quietly, I thought she was going to attack me but I could see that she was weak. But when I saw that one of her wings were missing, I asked the dragon what had happened and she told me the greatest secret to the dragon race, since she was going to die anyways. She told me that a dragon's scales are the hardest material known in the world, but while no sword could piece it or hammer could smash it, a single needle could piece right through it. Someone knew this and gained the dragon's trust and love, then one night it tore its wing off with several a needle and ran away with it, leaving the dragon to die." She was quiet for a few moments before taking another breath of her pipe and looked up at her son once more.

"So what does the dream mean?" He asked once she was done. His mother smiled and got out of her seat and headed to the door.

"What do any dreams truly mean? No one knows" She said gently as she began to leave. "Manifest destiny. Hei. Seize it, and hold it, and never let it go" She said with a smile and stayed at the door before looking back at him. "You look so much like your father, Hei. He would be proud of the man you have become" She said with a smile. He found himself smiling as he remembered his Papa.

"Even if every woman you've ever met is half your age" She teased with a laugh and left. Junior sighed heavily and rubbed his face gently and shook his head, he was too tired to bite. He simply reached over and turned off the lamp on his desk, kicked his feet up and folded his arms to try and get some sleep before the morning came.

Chapter End Notes

Whew, that was a long one. I'm really sorry for the length of this chapter but there was a lot I wanted to push into it before the ending of the first arc of the story. (Two more chapters before the ending of the first arc)
I was trying to go for a mystical kung-fu fighting style for He Si Xiong, Crouching tiger and other movies of that genre. Where they float around and shit, always love those movies.

I did warn you that I was might be adding a sex scene, and here it is. I'm sure people who ride the Baked Alaska (Still think that's one of the stupidest ship name's I've ever heard)(Edit: Baked Alaska is an actual dessert, never knew that so now it makes much more sense to me) ship will be all for it, if not, just wait a couple of chapters and i'll have something different for you I'm sure.

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo. If you really liked it, or hated it, or something, leave a comment with a review or feedback. It is always loved. And as always, thank you for taking the time to read my slice of madness!!
"So you are saying that Ruby Rose is my friend?" Penny Polendina asked.

"Yes," Weiss said with her eyes closed, her fingers rubbing soothing circles into her temple.

"But she is the enemy" Penny countered.

"She is now, but she was your friend before"

"But she is the enemy now?"

Weiss sighed deeply. For the past few years, all of her headaches were caused by dehydration or a sudden shift in the weather while being stationed out in the Vacuo Desert, the headache she had now was because someone kept asking stupid questions that always lead in the same circle logic for the past three days. The last time she had this kind of headache was when she was still at Beacon, dealing with a certain red cloaked woman. "Yes, she is the enemy of Atlas. She was your friend, but now she is your enemy" Penny nodded slowly as she began to process the information.

"What about Blake Belladonna?" The artificial ginger asked. "Is she the enemy as well?"

The specialist sighed lightly. "After she stole Military technology and ran, she is an enemy as well" Those words felt heavy in her heart. One by one, all of her friends were turning into enemies.

"And Yang Xiao Long? I have no record of any actions from her resulting in becoming an enemy of Atlas..." Penny asked lightly.

"Well, after trying to kill her sister and her partner, I doubt she'll see me as a friend anymore..." And with that, all the friends she had made were all gone. She was alone again.

Penny was about to ask something when Doctor Polendina walked into the white bedroom that the android was using. A simple bed, bookcase against the wall and a lens where the TV would be activated on a small self. In the middle of the room was a small round table with four chairs around it, that was where the current conversation was taking place. The only colour in the white room was from the books in the self and the bright green blanket with pink flowers on the bed. "Penny" He said lightly. "It's time for another diagnostic check. I would like you to finish up quickly"

"Of course, Father" She said as she gently stood up from her seat and smiled at Weiss. "It was good to see you again, Specialist Schnee. I hope you come back soon" She said politely before she walked out of the room. Weiss sighed heavily and put her head in her hands and collected herself for a few moments, feeling the light tremor in her hand agitated her beyond measure as she finally stood up and left the small bedroom.
She made her way down the halls and to a large room where dozens of machines were busy calculating something beyond her comprehension, several scientists and engineers were busy working as Penny was walked into a room next to this one, only separated by a pane of glass. She was stripped of her clothing and was left with basic underwear, Weiss could see her bare body. She looked exactly like a human, Weiss was not sure if she was surprised at how real she looked, or how scared she should be because of it.

Looking back, she saw General Ironwood walk into the room. His hands behind his back and his military uniform crisp and clean as it always was, the only thing different was a dark stubble that was growing on his face. She raised an eyebrow at him as he came to stand next to her.

"Anything?" He asked lightly.

"Nothing yet" She said simply as she looked away from him and at Penny, who was currently hooked up with several different coloured wires from the hidden ports of her body. "I've told her everything I can think of. Our time at Beacon, everything about her and the others. I don't know what else to do, nothing seems to get past that firewall..." She said lightly.

"Ja" The Doctor said as he walked up to them, large scroll in his hand as he looked back at Penny. "The best way I can think of this is that Penny has created a repressed memory. Much like a human or faunus would when a traumatic event happens to them. Only problem is that we cannot find a way around it, so Penny must work through it herself" He sighed and looked over at her through the window with a pained look in his eyes. A heavy sigh came from Ironwood as he scratched the stubble on his chin.

"What about her combat capabilities?" He asked gently.

"Well, she is at one hundred percent combat ready, she has full control over her swords and the energy weapons that powers them. The only thing we are missing is her Aura, without that, she is very vulnerable to all forms of gunfire and highly susceptible to other Hunters and Huntresses"

"The council will keep that in mind, thank you Doctor" The man nodded and went to work with his team while Ironwood turned and gestured to the door. Weiss followed him out of the room and down the bright hallways of Polendina Robotics. "Thank you for doing all you can with Penny, Specialist. It means a lot to Geppetto, she means a lot to him" Weiss nodded and noticed that he scratched his chin again, with a bit more vigour this time. She tried to hide her curious look because he stopped and cleared his throat. "I'm trying out a beard, what do you think?" He asked lightly.

Weiss studied the man before her and thought long and hard before speaking. "It makes you look...old" He blinked a few times cleared his throat again. "Yes, well. No one likes a beard that's still growing..." He said simply as they continued to walk. Signing out at the desk, they left the building and walked up the military transport they had taken in the morning, only to stop when a familiar face exited a luxury car that was near by and walked towards them.

"Sister!" A young man said as he approached.

"Whitley," Weiss said lightly as she watched her younger brother walk up to her with a smile on his face. He grew taller since she last saw him, filling out in his shoulders and his form became more and more like their fathers, something that Weiss did not really like about him. "What are you doing here?" She asked lightly as he gently placed his hands behind his back and smiled at her.

"I heard that you were back from the front, but you didn't come to visit me. I'm hurt" He said,
feigning pain in his voice as he touched his chest lightly.

"Sorry," She said lightly. "I've been busy since coming back to Atlas, I haven't had time to properly say hi," She said lightly. He simply nodded and began to reach inside of his jacket.

"That's quite alright, sister. I completely understand. Military and such..." He said lightly as he handed her a small dark grey envelope. "As such, we are holding a small charity ball tonight for veterans and those who were forced into medical discharge. If you're free, I'd love for you to come, maybe we can catch up" He said with a small smile. "I promise I won't make you sing" She took the invitation and looked it over and smiled softly.

"I'll do my best to make it, thank you, Whitley." She said as she slipped the card into a pocket and he smiled and nodded to her.

"Of course, I hope to see you there, Sister," He said as he looked over at Ironwood. "General," He said with a smile before leaving the two of them.

She watched as her brother got back into the car and drove away quickly, a light sigh escaped her lips as she looked up at the General, who simply nodded lightly. "Well, would you like a ride back to base?" He asked lightly.

"No thank you, General. I'll have Heartwood pick me up" She said simply. With that, General Ironwood took his leave and left in the transport before Weiss took out her scroll and sent a message to Heartwood for a pickup.

It was well into the evening when Weiss stepped out the Heartwood's car and began to walk up the pathway up towards Schnee manor. She was wearing a long flowing blue dress and a small wallet in her hands, the same dress she had in her dream earlier in the week. Walking past everyone, she gave nods and smiles to everyone who greeted her, she was surprised how easily she snapped back into the proper and perfect Weiss Schnee her father wanted her to be. Pushing the thought of that man from her mind, she walked into the main room where everyone in the higher class of Atlas was gathered and idly chatting with each other.

Looking around, she sighed deeply. Why was she here? she hated these events, even when she was forced to by her father. Was it to reconnect with her brother? maybe she really missed this atmosphere despite hating it at the same time. Before she could continue that train of thought, a tray with several flutes filled with champagne was lifted to her face. "Champagne, miss Schnee?" Asked a warm voice.

"Klein!" She smiled at the older man. His light brown hair had began to turn a bright grey, more wrinkles formed on his forehead and at the sides of his mouth but his eyes still retained their caring glow. "Thank you" She said with a wider smile as she took the glass gently from the platter and took a gentle sip from it.

"It's been far too long since you've been home? How have you been?" He asked her with a kind smile.

With a slight sigh, she looked off into a crowd of people before speaking. "I've been better" She began. "It's good to be home, but I know that I'm needed out on the front. Every day I'm here, more and more people get hurt because I'm not there to help" Klein, the only person she considered to be an actual father to her, smiled gently at her.

"Yes, I'm sure you're eager to get back out into the fight" He began as he blinked and his eyes changed from light brown to yellow. "But I'm glad to see that you're here and you're safe. You
really should write home more often, your brother worries about you, Snowflake" He said gently. Just as Weiss was about to say something when Whitley Schnee walked up with a smile. He was wearing a white suit with a blue handkerchief sticking out of the breast pocket. He was beginning to look more and more like father for her liking, all he needed was a pencil moustache and the illusion would have been complete.

"Sister" He said with a smile. "I'm so glad you could make it" he said as he took a glass from Klein and thanked him for it. The old butler simply bowed and offered them both a kind smile before he walked away to pass out the remaining flutes on his platter. "So, how about you been?" He asked lightly as he casually slipped a hand behind his back and smiled lightly at her.

"Good" She lied. "The front has been going smoothly for the while, though we seem to hit a pocket of resistance in one of the cities" She said lightly as she sipped form her drink. "How has the company been since I've been away?" She asked. She could honestly care less, but it was the only thing she could think of to talk to her brother about at the moment.

"Good" He smiled. "I do appreciate the fact that you put me on the board of executives before you made the company public" She could hear the bitterness in his voice as he spoke to her. "At least there is still a Schnee in the company" He said as he sipped on his drink. "You will be glad to know that we have been moving away from the ethical grey area" He added with a smile. "And when this war is finally over, Atlas will be there to ensure a smooth and speedy recovery to everything from power to medical equipment"

Weiss blinked at that revelation, she never would have thought that he would have put that idea forward. Maybe he was not so much like their father after all. "Really? I would have thought you would be against the war ending so quickly. You know, costs of Dust and all that"

"Well, exporting Dust is much cheaper than smuggling it out" He added as he adjusted his blue tie lightly. She was about to ask what he meant when a taller man walked up to his side and looked at her with short, black hair that was greying along the sides with a large moustache to match. Olive green eyes looked between the two of them as he gently placed a hand behind his back. He was wearing a dark blue overcoat with yellow linings, a black undercoat with yellow buttons and a yellow shirt under that was finished off with a black necktie.

Looking back at the man, Whitley smiled and turned back to Weiss. "Ah, I wanted to introduce you to someone" He said as he turned to include the new man into the conversation. "Weiss. This is Doctor Watts, he holds one of the seats of the Council and is in charge of general welfare of everyone in the kingdom" He gestured towards the man. "Doctor Watts, this is my sister, Weiss" The man, Watts, gently extended his hand to her and Weiss took it lightly. He then bent down and placed a light kiss on the back of her palm.

"A pleasure, miss Schnee" He said as he stood back up. "And I would prefer it if you would call me Chancellor Watts, I worked hard to earn that seat on the council and I'll be damned if anyone forgets that" He said lightly, not smiling at all. "I've heard much about you, miss Schnee. You've lead our forces on the Vacuoean front through many victories” He said lightly. She was about to thank him when he continued. "However, It seems you had hit a small snag when it came to taking the city of Ritrr and pulled our forces back” He raised an accusing eyebrow at her. She cleared her throat lightly and took a sip of the champagne to gather her thoughts before speaking.

"Yes," She began. "There was a very skilled Huntress on their side, I underestimated her and nearly cost me my life." She said simply.

"It was Ruby Rose, I believe?"
She felt her jaw tense up slightly and her teeth grate against each other slowly. She kept her voice at an even level and spoke slowly. "Yes. It was my former partner, from my time at Beacon Academy. Like I said, she was very skilled." Watts nodded lightly.

"Well, hopefully the next time you meet her, you won't make the same mistakes as last time." He said coldly before looking over to her brother. "Whitley, there was something I was hoping to discuss with you before I leave Atlas for a meeting." The younger Schnee nodded and excused himself from his sister and lead the doctor through the crowd of people. With a heavy sigh, Weiss downed the rest of her drink and set it on a table near by. She knew better than to snap at a Chancellor of Atlas, even if she was regretting ever coming here in the first place. Before she could grab another glass, another person walked up to her.

"Specialist Schnee," Ceil Soleil said lightly. She was wearing her specialist clothing of a white shirt and blue fingerless gloves that ran up the length of her arms. Her golden symbol in her forehead shone a bright contrast against her chocolate skin.

"Specialist Soleil, I wasn't aware that you would be attending as well." She said lightly. "How are things?" She asked lightly. Though she barely spoke to the woman during their accelerated Specialist training in the wake of the Mistrali attack of Atlas, she was glad to see another soldier here to talk to.

"Going good, I'm being redeployed to Mistral at the end of the week." She paused for a second then looked Weiss in the eyes. "You were here when Mistral attacked, weren't you?" She asked lightly. Weiss nodded slowly, she did not want to remember that attack. All the blood and gore was enough to mentally scar anyone, let alone the screams that kept her up some nights.

"Yes. I was. Where were you?" She asked lightly.

"Mourning for my partner," Ceil said simply. Not even she did not know that her partner had been rebuilt in the depths of A robotics laboratory in Atlas, but she swore to keep that fact a secret.

"I'm sorry," She said gently, not really knowing what else to say.

"It's strange though" Ceil began. "That while the people who attacked Atlas that day were all faunus, Mistral was blamed for the attack," She said lightly. Weiss looked at her oddly when she spoke. "Excuse me, I need to use the restroom," She said and hurried away, taking careful steps away from Weiss. She tried to follow her but she quickly bumped into a man who came by just at the wrong moment.

He apologised but she simply ignored it as she tried to follow the dark skinned woman through the crowd. Scanning the room, she saw that Ceil Soleil had simply vanished into thin air. With a sigh, she shook her head and tried to collect herself. What did she mean by that? If Mistral was not the one who attacked Atlas than who?

_Faunus_

How did she know they were all faunus if she was not here? Sure she noticed a few had ears or horns or patches of skin that were scales instead, but every one of them? it seemed impossible that Mistral would send that many faunus for a suicide mission.

Unless it was not Mistral who sent them.

She blinked, a sudden, terrible thought storming through her mind that chilled her to the bone. She
needed to know for sure. Storming out of the manor, a woman on a mission, she called up Heartwood and left in a hurry, not even bothering to say goodbye to her brother. Instead of going to her home, she told her driver to head to the Council building where the public records were being held. There she would find her answer.

Not bothering to change out of her formal dress, she had Heartwood stay in the car as she walked up to the door and pulled her identification card out of her wallet she carried with her. Pressing the card to the reader, she held it there for a second and waited for the beep that unlocked the door for her. She placed her hand on the handle and pulled it open just as a man bumped into her, nearly pushing her to the ground. "Oh, sorry!" He said as he reached out and grabbed her before she fell. Righting herself, she slapped his hands off of her body and corrected the parts of her dress that became a mess. "You alright, miss?" He asked with a strange accent.

Clearing her throat, she stared at him. He was wearing a hood over his head so she couldn't see his face very well, his clothing were all well worn and dirty, perhaps he was too poor to afford something better. "Yes, I'm fine." She said as she tried to move into the building to avoid him.

"You got a light, love?' He asked before she could disappear.

"No, goodbye" She stormed off past the door in time to mumble something under his breath but not actually hear what he said. Standing before the elevator, she swiped the card against the reader and waited for the door to open and was startled when a wrong noise came from the small machine. Instead of a green light on the top, a blinking red light was flashing. A small screen read "Invalid Identification" and the doors refused to open.

She tried again and the small scanner did the same thing another three times, growling at the piece of machinery, she was about to look for another elevator when a throat cleared next to her. Standing before her was a man wearing a basic suit, minus the jacket with his sleeves rolled up to his elbows. Dark blue hair, almost black and dim green eyes.

"Can I help you, Miss Schnee?" He asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Yes, my identification doesn't seem to be working," She said as she held the card up to the man. He took it while shifting a large amount of files in his arms and tried it against the reader. When it read the same thing, he raised his eyebrow slightly and examined the card.

"It seems to be corrupted..." He said as he handed it back. "If you'll follow me, I can make you a new one," He said with a smile and began to lead him through the halls to his office. When they arrived, she could see his work space was filled to the brim with different files and folders. He set the folders down and walked over to his terminal and began to type away on a scroll.

"Its a shame that the CCTs are no longer viable to be used as identification for government business anymore" He began. "What, with the war and all" Weiss simply nodded as she looked around lightly, anxious to try and find the evidence she was looking for so she could scratch the itch that was gnawing away at her inside of her mind. "What are you looking for anyways? It's pretty late to be here, Miss Schnee" He said as he tapped a few more times and a machine began to vibrate and made strange noises nearby.

"I was looking into the Mistral attack that happened three years ago." She said lightly as she folded her arms. The man paused for a moment and began to shift through a large amount of folders and held a red folder to her.

"Here." He said simply. "It was going to be recycled soon, but I guess you can have it for now, just be sure to bring it back once you're done." He said with a smile. She blinked a few times and
accepted the folder and looked up at the man.

"Oh, thank you. This helps a lot, actually" She said as she slipped the folder under her arm and accepted her new I.D. from the man.

"Anything for the military" He said with a smile. After she thanked him one last time, she turned and left the room and building, anxious to get to the bottom of this.

Ceil Soliel stood in an alleyway while staring at her watch, casting a faint glow across her face as she counted down the seconds to the call. Pulling her scroll out of her pocket, she counted down in her head watched the time tick by. As soon as the hour changed, her scroll only beeped once as she opened it right on time. "it's done" The voice said. "She has the file that you made me get and hold onto for almost three years. Is there a reason for that as well as having me dress up like a monkey?" The man asked, she could hear him walking through the halls of the building he was currently in.

"It doesn't matter to you," Ceil said quickly.

"And my money?"

"I'll send you the address, it will all be paid in full. Don't be late" She hung up the phone and quickly sent a message out to her contact to drop the money that was owned to the thief. There was going to be a five second window for the thief to pick it up. If he was not going to be there on time, then it was his fault. She pocketed the scroll after the message was sent and went back to reading her watch and waited, her foot tapping against the stone below her. Finally, the pickpocket turned into the alleyway, pockets in his hands and hood over his face. "You're thirty two seconds late" She said finally when he stopped in front of her.

"What?" He looked around and shook his head finally. "What'ver I did what you wanted, where's my money?" He asked as he held his hand out.

"Did you say exactly what I wanted you to say?" She asked him.

"Yeah, I pushed her and only held her for a second and swapped her ID card, like you asked. Then asked if she was okay, waited five seconds then asked her for a light. I don't even smoke" He pointed out. "Was there a reason for that?" He asked her.

"It doesn't concern you" She said simply as she reached into her pocket and tossed a bundle of lien cards to the man. He caught it and examined it before pocketing it and nodded. If the timing of the two were off, then Weiss Schnee would have missed the thief, and the thief would have gotten caught by the security guards that were about to come down their hall and notice that he did not work there. She had crafted a precise, clockwork ballet and everyone managed to play their parts.

"What'ver..." He said as he simply walked away. She was left alone once more and checked her watch again. With a sigh, she walked deeper into the alleyway and folded her arms and waited.

*Why does everyone have to be late all the time...*

Just as she finished her thought, a dark red and black portal opened up in front of her and a woman wearing dark red and black clothing and armour walked out of it. White and red mask on her face with raven locks flowing down her back. "You're late," Ceil said simply as she walked up to the woman.

"Sorry, I needed to do something." She said from behind her mask. "Is everything ready?"
"Yes. miss Schnee has the truth and the keys to ruining her plans" Ceil said as she stood and was ready to travel through the portal that the woman has at her command.

"Even with the truth in her hands, it'll be useless if General Ironwood doesn't point her in the right direction..." Raven said as she reached back and prepared to slash her way through reality.

"Do you not trust the General?" She asked lightly.

"You're still new, you'll learn that I don't trust anyone..." She slashed the wall, and the world was torn open.

"Noted..." With that, she stepped through the portal and left Atlas behind.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the late update, been fighting off writers block for a while now, but I managed to pull something out of my ass, hopefully you liked it.

So there is one more chapter before the ending of the first arc of my story. After that, I might break for a bit and gather my thoughts as well as concentrate on a few other stories before continuing this one. (Visions of Today and A Roses Knight) However, I'm not very good at staying focused so it probably won't be a very long break...

Also, Damn Vol.4 cannon. Sometimes it fixes my plot holes for me, other times it totally ruins what I thought characters would be like. (I'm looking at you Raven...) While I will by trying to work my story around ideas that pop up in the show, I will still be sticking with my ideas for 99% of the time.

So I also just found out about the statistics tab in my dashboard and found out that I can actually see who many people suscribled to my story. (45 at the time I'm posting this) And I just want to thank each of you for doing that, it means so much to me that you liked it so much that you are willing to get an email notification (Sometimes at three in the morning because I'm a terrible human being) telling you that I posted a new chapter so that you can be there right away and read it as soon as it comes out. You are each my hero(s)

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo. If you already have, leave a comment. (Please, for the love of god leave a comment, I need the feedback...) And thank you for taking the time to read my little slice of madness.
Two updates in a week, hot damn I'm on a roll.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Black Queen Pt: I

Do you believe in Destiny?

It was always there, in the back of her mind. Her voice echoing through her thoughts during the day and dreams during the night. Even now, as she sat at the long table made out of purple crystal, in a seat made out of dead wood. Her knee was bouncing in anxiety, the hole where her eye should be was itching something fierce and it was taking every bit of willpower she had to not take off the patch and scratch at her wound. With a heavy sigh, she grits her teeth lightly as she looked around the table at the others that that were seated around the table like her. To her right was Tyrian, a madman in every sense of the term. With a long face and wild eyes with small specks of gold filled with hatred for everyone around him. Crouching in his seat, he twitched lightly, his eyes shifted to every corner of the room and small fits of maniacal giggles filled the silent room. Across from him, sat Hazel, a large, built man with his arms crossed across his chest. His eyes were closed and looked to be resting quietly as they waited for their meeting to start. To Hazel's right, sat Doctor Watts.

Oh sorry, Chancellor Watts.

Cinder thought bitterly as she eyed up the man who sat across from her. His green eyes cast down...
at the Scroll he was currently tapping away at. Ever since he had been elected onto the Atlas Council, his already arrogant ego had inflated ten times that day, forcing everyone to refer to him by his new title. Sensing that he was being stared at, Watts looked up at her and narrowed his eyes. "What do you want, Cinder," He asked her as he snapped his scroll shut and slipped it into his coat. The sudden interaction caught the attention of the other two, as they seemed to look over at them now.

"Nothing from you. Chancellor." She spat out through gritted teeth. Her thumb gently tracing the outline of the fingers of her right hand. It was just as scarred as the rest of her face. Her left arm stayed under the table, covered by the long sleeve of her asymmetrical red dress, her eye narrowed at the man and her right hand clenched in fury. He laughed lightly as he leaned back in his seat, she could see from his movements that he had just placed his foot on his knee to watch her.

"Its about time you started to use my title, I was beginning to worry if there was any brain damage that went with that wound," He said with a small smile from under his ridiculous moustache he wore on his upper lip. Cinder was about to say something when the doors opened and everyone turned and saw Salem entering the room. Quickly standing from their seats, everyone watched as the woman with white skin and black veins spreading across her arms. Turning, she silently walked across the room, almost floating across the floor as she walked.

"Remember your place, Doctor," Salem said gently. "It was us that made sure that you were elected to your current seat so that we might continue this war, Watts." She said as she came to the head of the table and took her seat.

"Yes, well" Watts began as everyone took their seats again. His gaze turned back to Cinder and sighed deeply. "This war would be going a great deal smoother if someone hadn't botched her end of the deal to ensure this war" Cinder was about to retort when Salem intervened once more.

"Our Fall Maiden did exactly as she was instructed" The red and black-eyed woman began. "Vacuo fell too quickly before, though the Ancient One was awakened but it did not leave it's lair. So we needed to assure that Mistral won't fall as easily, and Cinder did just that" Watts tapped at the table gently with his finger as he looked over at Salem.

"Yes," Hazel. "And in doing so, she created a man who could stop full-fledged assaults of Atlesian Specialists, Paladin Mech walkers, Knight robots and divisions of soldiers by himself and still come out alive..." He said simply as he looked over at Cinder. "And if memory serves correctly, the person you made this man into an army killer, isn't your pawn anymore" A small snicker came from the man seated to Cinder's right. Tyrian holding back a fit of mad laughter. Cinder gritted her teeth as the itch behind her eye patch grew more intense. She did not forget the fact that both Emerald and Neopoliton had only betrayed her, but also ensured the survival of Yang Xiao Long, Ruby Rose's older sister. Ever since Emerald had turned Jaune Arc into a soldier of no equal, she had been growing further and further away from her. Cinder did not think anything of it at first, but now it infuriated her how she did not see it coming.

"Yes." Watts chimed in. "I believe it was during the mission to kill the silver-eyed girl's older sister" Now Salem looked over at her with a glance. Cinder avoided her gaze and looked at her her lap, her left arm hanging limply at her side.

"I thought I told you to not worry about her, Cinder" Salem asked, her red eyes glowing dangerously. Cinder looked up at stared at her.

"That girl did this to me" She pointed to her face, to the scars that crossed the bridge of her nose and the place where her left eye used to be. "I want her to know the pain I have felt"
"And she will," Salem said as she raised her hand to calm her. "But it was all in due time, because of your actions, we have now lost two tools that could have been used, and you will have to make up for their shortcomings" The woman then placed both her hands in front of her on the table and looked around. "Tyrian, what is the progress on the location of the other Maidens?" She asked with a slight tilt of her head, the crystals that hung from the offshoots of her hair bun making a noise as she moved to look at the crazy person.

Tyrian giggled lightly as he grinned widely and spread his hands in front of him. "We are in the middle of a war, my lady" He began. "Hundreds of people die every day because of it. It makes finding the Maidens a very hard task. However, I got word that Ash and Ember were closing in on the Winter Maiden" He then licked his lips and hummed lightly. "I wish I could watch them take the powers." He said quietly. "Their cruelty is a thing of beauty..." He giggled as his wild eyes looked over at Cinder Fall and an even wider grin formed on his face.

More cruel than you ever thought. Cinder thought. I should know...

"Any other news?" She asked lightly. Hazel was next to speak up, lifting his head so he could look at Salem in the eyes. "The White Fang had relocated their remaining members from Vale to Mistral and will begin their operation of bringing the kingdom down as soon as I give the word" Their leader nodded gently and looked over to the final member of their circle.

"Watts?"

The man shook his head slightly and leaned back in his seat. "Nothing that concerns you, Lady Salem." He said simply. The Fall Maiden could not help a small smirk forming on her lips as she found something that could embarrass the man in front of Salem, like he did to her so many times before.

"Forgive me, Doctor Watts" Cinder said with a smile and a glint in her amber eye. "But I believe one of your robotics facilities was broken into recently. Isn't that a security breach that should be brought up in this meeting?" She asked. Watts narrowed his eyes she saw his jaw flex as anger rushed through his blood, his fist came down and bashed the table in front of him to make his point.

"I told you, Its none of your-"

"Watts" Salem warned with a red glow of her eyes.

With a reluctance, he reached into his coat to pull out his scroll and began to go through the files he had on them. Cinder gently began to tap the table nervously, something about this was eating
away at her. Finally, he found the file and cleared his throat. "It was an artificial arm, ordered about four years ago"

"What side" Cinder asked. Watts simply shot her a look and continued on, not wanting to gather anymore of Salem's wrath.

"A right arm, from the elbow down" He began.

"Who ordered it" Cinder demanded. No no no no!

When he found whoever had ordered, she watched as his eyebrows raised in surprise and a few blinks to make sure he was reading it correctly. He cleared his throat and spoke. "A rather odd name" He began. "It was ordered by a man named Oscar Zoroaster Phadrig Isaac Norman" He read the names with a slight shake of his head. Hazel raised his eyebrow at the strangeness and Tyrian went into a laughing fit from the pure absurdity of it. However, it was Salem's reaction to the name that caught her attention. Her eyes widen in realization and her hands slowly balled into fists.

"Ozpin..." She said quietly. The laughter stopped and all eyes were on her.

"What? I thought you killed him" Watts said as he looked over to Cinder.

"I did" She growled at him.

"Obviously not If he's ordering limbs from Atlas!" He snapped.

Cinder jumped to her feet and slammed her fists onto the table. Her long sleeve covering her left hand as her glove covered the right. "I d-" Her throat closed suddenly. The veins in her throat flexed outwards as she willed her body not to succumb to a coughing fit, let alone in front of him. He raised his eyebrow and waited for her to finish her sentience. Cinder took deep breaths and swallowed a number of times to loosen her throat up enough to speak, and when she did, it came out as a raspy whisper. "I did" She managed through gritted teeth. The two of them stared into each others eyes for a long moment before Salem broke it up with her voice.

"Ozpin is a man who has every outcome calculated before he makes a single move," She said gently as she stood from her seat and began to walk behind it towards a large window that overlooks a birthing pit of Grimm. "I wouldn't be surprised if he saw this coming and prepared for its eventuality several years before the fall," She said as she turned back around to face them. "The question now, is who stole it," She said lightly. Again, Watts tapped away at his scroll before placing it in the middle of the table, a lens built into the device came to live and projected a holoscreen, not unlike a television that everyone has. On it, was a young woman with raven black hair with a black bow on top. She wore a white coat and long boots on her legs. She was looking away from security camera that took the photo, but in her hand, she could see a large case, presumably the arm in question. Everyone looked at the photo, but the one who spoke first surprised everyone.

"Blake Belladonna" Hazel said softly, his arms coming uncrossed from his chest. "That picture is dated three days after she destroyed a White Fang safe house in Vale. How could she go from Vale to Atlas in that short about of time" He said simply.

"Impossible" Watts said with a shake of his head. "Even if she had access to an airship to Atlas, there simply isn't enough time" He reached for his scroll. This time, the conversation was inturrupted by the hysterical laughter from Tyrian.

"This rich," He said with a grin. "Well. While I was in Vacuo, searching for the Spring Maiden, I
heard the beautiful sounds of war, so I went to investigate" He said with gestures of his hands. "Upon getting there, I saw a sight that would bring our Fall Maiden to tears. Little red and little Schnee were fighting" He grinned as he looked over at Cinder. "OH what a sight to behold. But before little red could deal the finishing blow, that woman stopped the fight before it could be finished' He pouted lightly then shrugged with a grin. "So, how did she get from Vale, to Vacuo, to Atlas then..." He grinned slightly.

"The Silver eyed girl was in Vacuo?" Salem asked as she came back to the table. "Who ordered that?"

Watts checked his scroll once more. "It wasn't one of our people inside the Reclamation army. Our man was killed by a White Fang attack on a compound a few weeks ago" He said as he shook his head. "Adam and his merry band of mongrels kill more of our people than the war does. We really ought to put him on a tighter leash..." He said simply as he pocketed the scroll finally. Salem ignored him for a moment and looked out the window in thought for a few moments before speaking at last.

"A good chess master knows every move he is going to make before the board is even set up..." She then turned to face her pawns.

"Watts, I want you to push the Vacuo front, wipe out the remaining resistance there then redeploy everyone who survives to Mistral" The man simply nodded as his orders were given. "Tyrian, I want you to go to Vacuo and do whatever it takes to summon the Ancient One to the surface, flood the deserts in blood if you have to, he must be free"

"At once, My lady." He said with a grin and a laugh.

"Hazel, I want you to take a more personal handle on dear Adam, and make sure no more mistakes happen where he kills our people" He nodded simply. She looked at each of them then held her hand out. "Mercury, come here," She said gently. Mercury Black had been silently standing near Cinder's seat the whole meeting. She had almost forgotten he was there to begin with. With smooth steps towards Salem, he extended his hand to her when she gestured for him to do so. She reached up and plucked a gem that hung from her hair and held it up to him. "I want you to find Yang Xiao Long," She said as she placed the tip of the black jewel against a vein in his wrist. He hissed in pain as the gem was shoved into his blood stream and his veins slowly turned black. "And I want you to kill her. And make sure you do not fail this time" The young man nodded as he flexed his wrist a little bit, the black faded from his blood.

"Yes, Lady Salem." He said as he turned and walked out of the room to do the mission that was given to him. When Salem did not have anything else to say, everyone got out of their seats and left to do their jobs. Watts gave one last glare to Cinder before he left, leaving her and Salem alone in the room. Slowly, Cinder got out of her seat and went to leave as well when she called out to her.

"Cinder," She said lightly, looking at her through the reflection in the glass. "Did you kill Ozpin?"

"Yes." Cinder said quickly. "I stared down at his lifeless corpse as I stomped down on his throat" Salem nodded slightly as she watched her.

"And his cane?" She asked lightly. Cinder paused and looked at her with a confused look. "That is all. Thank you Cinder" She said as she turned her attention to what was outside. Cinder simply bowed lightly and left the room through the same door as the others. With Cinder gone, Salem looked out and narrowed her eyes, her red iris glowing slightly. "What are you planning, Ozpin..." She said gently.
When Cinder reached her room inside the castle she closed the door behind her and locked it, not that it would stop Salem, who owned everything in the castle, but it still gave her peace of mind. She walked over to her bed and sighed deeply before eyeing up a mirror that was standing against the wall of her room. Narrowing her eyes, she walked over to it and examined herself in the reflection. With a deep breath, she reached up with her right hand and pulled the face mask that covered the left of her face off and pushed her hair behind her ear. Scars wracked her face and she could peer into the hole that was her eye. Leaning in, she growled at her ugly face and traced her limp eyelid as it fell into the socket lightly. She then dropped her hand down to her shoulder and fingered ties that held her dress against her body, pulling them from their holds, she watched as her red dress drop to the floor. As it fell in a pile around her feet, she looked away from the mirror to collect her will to bear witness to the scene before her. Dragging her gaze up, she saw herself for what she was now.

The left half of her body was scarred beyond recognition. The scars traveled down her neck and over her chest, consuming everything from her shoulder down, her nipple completely gone from the power. Her eye trailed down to the contorted, pink skin that covered her arm and hip, stopping at mid thigh finally. Slowly, she gripped her left hand as tightly as she could and raised the fist up to the air. She could feel the skin stretch and contort as it tried to follow, she felt the pull of the scars that covered her arm as she strained her muscles just to curl her arm. Her limb shaking through exertion as she gritted her teeth in concentration as she looked at herself in the mirror. She looked so weak and ugly now. She was supposed to be a Maiden, one of the most powerful beings on the planet, and she could barely lift her arm.

"Do you believe in Destiny?"

In a fit of fury and rage, she threw a wild left hook into the mirror and pushed her fist through the glass. It shattered and fell around her feet as the frame stood by simply. With a cry of exertion, she looked down at her fist and saw shards of the mirror poking through her flesh, but she felt nothing. She had lost all feeling in her arm and everywhere her scars were on her body. With a struggled cry, she fell to her knees and forced her hand to open from the clenched fist. She pulled the shards out with ease and tossed the bloody glass to the side. She stared at herself in the broken pile on the floor and gritted her teeth as the ugly woman stared back at her. A small pocket of flame coming from her empty eye socket.

"...Yes"

----------------------------------------------------------

Ozpin stared at his own reflection in the window of his home. A steaming cup of coffee in his hand and his glasses on the bridge of his nose, she was about to take a sip from his tin mug when the sound of Raven's portal opened up down a hallway. With a small smile he turned around and watched as the Branwen twins enter the main living area. As soon as they took a step towards Ozpin, Qrow was intercepted by Ceil Soleil, who was busy tapping at her watch and giving Qrow the dirtiest look she could give him. "You're late," She said simply. The man simply shrugged and placed his hand on her face and pushed her to the side. "And drunk, by the smell of you..." She said as she recovered from the shove and stood next to Ozpin. "Sir, what will you do about this?" She asked as she pulled out a large scroll and got ready. He just smiled at her gently and sipped his drink.

"He's always drunk." He said simply. "You get used to it" To prove his point, Qrow pulled out his flask and took a look gulp from it and exhaled deeply.

"Yep." He popped the 'p' as he smiled at the younger woman. "So. Yang is on her way to Mistral as
we speak..." He said as he turned his attention to Ozpin. "With your "Acquired assets" in tow" He used finger quotations when he spoke. "I still don't know why we don't just gather them here and tell them what's going on without all this running around shit" He slurred as he gestured wildly in his drunken state to try and get his point across.

To answer his question, Ozpin walked around the room and stood in a chair that was facing another chair with a small table between them. On the table was a chess board all set up and ready to be played. "Tell me, Qrow." He said gently. "Do you play a game of chess before you have your pieces on the board?" He asked him.

Qrow stomped his foot onto the ground and pointed at the man. "My nieces are not pawns in your game, Oz!" He shouted at him. Ozpin noticed that while Qrow was understandable furious at the idea, Raven remained silent, not even bothering to take her mask off.

"Of course not," Ozpin said calmly as he reached down and plucked a white rook from the board first. "They are my rooks, my knights, my bishops and my queen" He picked up single piece of each as he spoke and looked at everyone one of them as he walked towards Qrow first. "But how can I fight a battle with a bloody, wilted rose-" He set the queen in Qrow's hand and walked up to Ceil. "-A shattered princess-" He handed her the bishop then walked to Raven. "-a dying flame-" Then finally he held up the knight himself to show them. "-And a shadow threatened to be consumed by her own darkness. How can any of them possible stop her, when they can't even save themselves?" He asked as he set his knight piece on the window sill and stared out.

Each of them, in turn set their pieces down somewhere in the room and looked around at each other, it was Raven that spoke next. "So what do we do now?" She asked gently.

"Now," He said as he stared into his mug of coffee. "We remind them about who they were, before this world took away their innocence. We must remind them that they are Huntresses"

"That's a pretty tall order, Oz," Qrow said simply as he took another gulp from his flask and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "What makes you think we can do such a thing"

Ozpin smiled lightly as he turned his back to them once more and stared out into the green forest around his little home. He sipped his drink once more and spoke into nothing. "Qrow, I trusted you to do the right thing when Vale fell, and you did not disappoint" He smiled as he turned back to his oldest friend. "Now I ask that you trust me just as much" The man in question sighed and ran his hand through his hair.

"They're just kids, Oz..." He said gently.

"Yes," He began. "But kids like them were born in a storm. They have lightning in their souls, thunder in their hearts and chaos in their bones. They will destroy you in the most beautiful way possible, and why then leave, you will understand why storms are named after people" Everyone looked at each other and nodded slowly.

"Now then," Ozpin said lightly. "We've got work to do"

Chapter End Notes

And there we have it everyone! chapter fifteen and the last chapter of the first arc of the story!
And inspiration for Ozpin's little speech is here: Insp

It's been a long road and I'm everyone has been with me the entire way, it means so much to me to hear your comments and your praises, which in turn fuels future chapters. So please, even if it's just to shit on my story, just tell me what I did wrong, point out the mistakes so that I can fix them!

That being said, the story is going to get darker. The angst train has only just left the station and there are no breaks.

On that note, I'm going to be taking a small break to catch up on a couple of things, (A few stories need some new chapters and video games need to be caught up on. (Need to get ready for Mass Effect Andromeda that means playing through ME1 and I am not looking forward to it.)) I am planning on having a tumbler up soon so I can post updates and little teasers for future chapters there, I'll let you know when it comes out so you can go there first for things written by me and other pieces of artwork that needs to be shared with everyone.

So as always, if you enjoyed, please leave me a Kudo, a comment will always make me smile, whether it's filled with with love, hate or just pointing out how many mistakes I make, please let me know. And thank you to everyone who has taken the time to read my madness so early in the morning. (Sorry subscribers for email notifications so early in the morning)
The Wilting Rose Pt: I

A rather large jump from the jeep woke Ruby Rose up from her terrible attempt at some much needed sleep, it was fine though, all that waited for her was nightmares anyways, a dream that was red like roses, one she had not had in a long while. With a deep inhale of the hot air that was the Vacuoean desert, she ran her hand over her face to try and wipe away any sleep that still desperately clinging to her face.

Looking to her left, she saw Midori sitting in the driver's seat, concentrating on navigating the sand dunes in front of them so they arrived at the town in one piece. With a sigh, she straightened up and shifted the rifle form of Crescent Rose so it was leaning up against her body and placed her foot against the dashboard in front of her. She did not like driving around, being this confined in case something happened made her uncomfortable, but no one else had anything close to her semblance so in order for the whole squad to arrive with her, she was forced into the jeep. It was Sapphi's voice that broke her concentration of staring out to the endless sands of the desert.

"Are we there yet?" She asked.

"No" Midori said simply enough.

"Are we there yet?"

"No"

"Are we there-"

"Sapphi" Midori held his finger up. "I swear to fuck, if you say that one more time I'm turning this thing around"

She giggled lightly as she leaned back in her seat. Ruby did not know her full name since everyone called her Sapphi, she was the squad's demolitions expert. Her tactical vest had several different types of grenades made from various Dusts and more mundane materials for a whole rainbow of explosives at her disposal. Looking in the side mirror, Ruby saw the woman in question dragging a whet stone over a combat knife. Next to her was Riflemen Cobalt Tucks. One of the few she had given a beat down upon her arrival at the base.

He was wearing the standard helmet and sporting a swollen, split lip on his dark skin, he was busying himself with reading a magazine with a naked woman featured on the cover. Next to him
was Riflemen Higgs Auburn, he was the one that was most against her leading their squad. He had his blond streak of hair down the left side of his more natural black. He had his arms folded over his chest and his head down, resting as much as he could for tomorrow when they would go into the infested town.

Eventually, they stopped and everyone got out to set up camp for the night, Ruby was glad to step out of the steel deathtrap and stretch out her legs. Looking down the line, she saw the second half of the squad pulling up behind them and doing the same. Getting out of the second jeep was Marksman Harold Concador, the one who seems to be emotionally hollow and always speaks in a flat monotone voice.

Slung over his shoulder was his designated marksmen rifle, a semi-auto rifle while all others had fully automatic assault rifles. Next to him was the combat medic, Violet Alluim. She was the one who patched up the ones she took care of. Deep purple hair, almost black if the light conditions were right, was pulled back in tight ponytail and her face was covered in freckles. She had a large satchel with a large red cross on a white background on it, her bag of medical supplies she never went anywhere without.

On the other side of the second jeep, getting out of the drivers seat was the woman with the pink hair, Cotton Officinarum, or Pixie, as the other's called her. She was the squad's heavy weapons specialist, carrying a light machine gun that can be mounted on a collapsible bipod, she was also in charge of the munitions that the entire squad uses while on missions. Lastly was Riflemen Ray Pewt. With silver hair and dark green eyes, he was sporting a large bruise on his neck where she smashed the pole into him during the brawl. He looked over at Ruby and gently rubbed his neck before going to help Pixie unload the camp supplies that they needed for the night.

As the sun disappeared and the night fell, the squad made a small fire to keep warm during the night and broke open the meal rations. Bartering and trading for the different pieces of each meal passed through the squad, promises of switching duties and exchange of lien cards used as offerings. Ruby was satisfied with her own unsatisfying meal. She broke open the heat pack to start cooking the main dish of her meal that may or may not be just very low quality meat substitute shoved into a bag, when she heard something that caught her attention.

"Hey, who's willing to trade something for these cookies?" Before Tucks could finish speaking, the cookies on his hand became a large foil packet. Slowly, he look at his hand and blinked a few times and saw a trail or rose petals that lead to Rose, she was already biting into one of them and walking away from the group. "Okay...No skin off my scrot, two mains for me" He said with a shrug as he tore open the first one and began to eat it.

"They're not even that good..." Violet said as she watched Sergeant Major Rose walk off.

She was right, they were not good at all. The sugar was of poor quality, the butter was fake and the eggs were simulated, the chocolate that was used had to be at least ten years old. They were cooked for way too long and were terribly dry, no better than crumbling cardboard than an actual cookie. Truth be told, they were not the worse she had tasted, a few stolen Atlas ration packs had even worse cookies than the Vacuo ones. The asshats at Atlas thought raisin cookies were a good idea, just one more reason why they were her enemy. They thought they could get away with destroying one of her last joys in a joyless world.

Walking over behind one of the jeeps, she looked back to see if anyone was watching her. Making sure the coast was clear, she made her way up one of the few dunes they had stopped next to and walked up and over it, she travelled away from the camp to ensure that was far enough away that no one could sneak up while she did what she needed to do. Shoving the last bit of the second
cookie into her mouth, she brushed her hands off as she sat against a dune and pulled her Aura Stims out from her pouch and lined everything up. A clean needle, the medical tubing and the substance in question came out last.

Holding the small bottle up to her face, she tilted it to the side so it collected in the bottom corner and shook it gently, making sure that was really all she had left. A tired sigh left her mouth and shook her head, there was enough here to get another two hits, maybe three if she spread it out, but with the fight with the creatures Grimm coming, she did not want to take those chances.

Pulling the needle from the wrapper, she pushed the thin steel through the stopper and pulled the amount she needed. Holding it in her teeth so she could have both hands as she unbuttoned her sleeve and tie the medical tubing against her arm. She found her vein despite the darkness, all she had to do was feel for the scabs and scars from the two years she had been using the stuff.

Pushing the needle into her arm, she pushed the plunger down and filled her arm full of the drug before releasing the tubing and allowed the substance full access to her body. Inhaling deeply, she felt her tiredness leave her body, she felt more alive now. Tossing the spent needle into the sands, she laid down and stared up at the darkening sky and ran her hands down her face, everything felt better now, like she was not running on fumes and bare minimum of everything.

Slowly blinking, she sat up slowly and stretched out lightly before pulling the hood over her head. The glowing eyes side effect would be more apparent at night than during the day time, and she did not need anyone talking to her about this stuff. Slowly, she began to place the items back in her pouch but gave a slight pause when she picked up the small glass vial of the stimulant and began to slowly turn it around in her fingers. The faint glow of the moonlight highlighted the milky fluid it contained. Flipping it upside down, the printed logo of the Atlas Kingdom could be seen, and below it, in tiny letters that could barely be read, followed the curve of the logo:

"Product Of Schnee Dust Company"

Ruby gritted her teeth and her fist tighten around the bottle as a rage bellowed forth from inside of her. Standing up suddenly, she turned and hurled the drug as far as she could in a random direction. She watched as it flew through the air and landed far enough away from her to feel comfortable. It was only afterwards she had a moment to think about her actions did she realise what she had done.

"Shit!" She hissed at herself and ran in the direction she threw her drug, she may hate the fact that it came from the enemy, but she still needed it to fight at her full strength against them. With a light jog, she followed the line where she threw and hoped it did not already get swallowed up by the desert, it was her last hit before she could get more from her stash at the base.

Luckily, the moonlight reflected off the glass and she found her precious drug. She walked up to it and sighed a breath of relief as she picked at the inside of her right elbow before she crouched down to pick it up. "Please, Ruby. Stop this madness" Looking up, she pulled the vial close to her and saw Summer Rose standing just a few meters away. "Just talk to them, I'm sure they will help you!"

"SHUT UP!" Ruby shouted at the ghost. "You don't care about me! You haven't care about me for..." She tried to think, how long has her mother been dead for? how old was she when she never came home? The more she thought of the answer to these questions, but more popped up in her mind. How long has this war been going on? How old was she?

Shaking her head, she put the vial back in its place in the pouch and turned to return to the camp, but not before warning the ghost to leave her alone. When she got back, everyone had finished their meals and were just lazing around in the usual ways soldiers did when they had down time. Playing
cards and other gambling games or doing some sort of physical activity. She made her presence known by a quick shout to everyone.

At once, they all stopped what they were doing and listened. "Tomorrow we're hitting the town, it will be crawling with Grimm so everyone needs to swap over to large caliber dust rounds or you'll just piss them off more than they already are. I want all weapons swapped over and calibrated before turning in for the night. I'll take first watch" With that, everyone put their things away and pulled weapons and specialised munitions out to be worked on.

A perk of the weapons that were manufactured in Vacuo was how easily the weapons could be field stripped and cleaned. They had to be, since the sand would otherwise cause jams and damage if left inside of the weapons for any length of time. It was one of these aspects Ruby looked into when she first drew up the designs for Crescent Rose.

Sitting herself on top of one of the jeeps, she kept an eye out for any Grimm that wanted to check out their little camp as everyone was practically weaponless for the next few minutes. She watched as barrels and firing pins were swapped out to take larger bullets. "Man, how big do these Grimm have to be to need these rounds?" Tucks asked as he held up one of the larger rounds.

"Well, Grimm have bone armour, and our regular rounds can't do shit for dick against armour that thick" Pixie replied as she placed a few boxes filled with the Grimm ammo around the group so everyone had access to it. "This your first time fighting Grimm, Tucks?" She asked with a small smirk on her face before stripping her weapon to swap out the innards.

"Yeah. I signed up to fight people, not beings made from pure nightmares..." He replied as he put his rifle back together and dry fired it into a dune to make sure everything worked properly. Then he got to work loading up his magazines.

"No you didn't" Midori said. "You didn't sign up to fight, you signed up so you had something to do and didn't wind up just sitting around waiting for the end to come..."

"Truth"

Within an hour, everyone's weapons were swapped over and a watch roster was drafted. When her watch was over she decided to sleep inside of the jeep, sure it would have been warmer to sleep next to the fire outside with the rest of her squad, but she knew she was going to have the red dream again. Sure enough, she jolted upright from her place laying down in the backseat and sighed deeply. She wiped the sweat off her brow and lay back down and tried to will herself back to sleep, but it never came. So she spent the next several hours staring at the roof of the jeep and letting her mind wander endlessly.

She thought about her old friends, of Blake, Weiss and Yang. Of Jaune, Ren and Nora. She thought of Pyrrha and her pointless sacrifice. Just as she was about to sit up to get out of the jeep for a breath of fresh air, she felt a hand gently press against her face, lightly brushing a strand of hair from her face. Looking up, she saw the smiling face of Summer Rose looking down at her.

Before Ruby could yell at the ghost, she began to hum gently, catching Ruby off guard. She did not know it, but it felt familiar to her, it stirred something deep in her soul. She felt her eyes grow heavy, her breathing relaxed and who whole body became weightless when her mother opened her mouth and softly sang her to sleep with a melody that Ruby had long forgotten.

"Long ago, before we met,
I dreamed about you.
The peace you'd bring.
The songs we'd sing.  
The way you'd make things new.

Then one day, you arrived.  
I heard your angel cry.  
Helpless, small, and perfect,  
Welcome to your life.

And on that day, I made a vow.  
Whispered and true.  
No matter what, no matter how,  
I made this promise to you.

I will cling, I will clutch,  
I'll hold onto you, I won't turn away.  
I won't leave, I won't go,  
I will stay with you all our days."

The next time Ruby opened her eyes, it was caused by a loud banging noise echoing through the cab. Leaning up quickly, she saw Midori leaning into the cab and down at her. "We're packing up, Rose. Time to get up" He said before leaving her to get up on her own. With a deep inhale, she sat up all the way and stretched her back, earning a few satisfying pops from her bones. Looking back at her sleeping place, she half expected her mother to still be sitting there, but all she saw was nothing. Slapping her cheeks with her hands, she shook her head to try and wake herself up more.

Get your head on straight. You're losing it.

Getting out of the jeep, she saw that everything was nearly done, so she ate her cold breakfast bar as she got settled back into the passenger seat of the first jeep and they continued their journey to the town. Once more, the ride was mostly silent save for a few snide remarks and Sapphi getting mad at Tusk and threw his dirty magazine out the window. Ruby noticed that Midori had glanced over at her a number of times during the ride. With a sigh, she waited for him to look over at her one more time before speaking. "What" She asked simply without looking at him.

"What?"

"You keep looking at me. What do you want"

He was silent for a few moments before speaking. "You okay?" He asked lightly.

"Fine"

"Don't seem like it to me"

"And what do you know about me?" She asked as she looked over at him and narrowed her eyes at him.

"Well" He began. "For one you're Ruby Rose, Huntress from Beacon academy that got accepted two years early and despite your young age, was made leader of your own team. Then when the Fall hit, you joined up with the Reclamation army and rose through the ranks rapidly, earning the name 'Red Death' after an Atlesian assault that was targeting a city you were stationed in. Using your semblance and weapon, you had almost three hundred confirmed kills from that attack alone and bought enough time for the civilians to evacuate. So far so good?" He asked as he raised his
eyebrow and looked over at her. Ruby simply rolled her eyes and looked out the side window and watched the passing dunes.

"And in the four days I’ve known you, you’ve used the bathroom almost religiously and barely speak unless you’re barking out orders"

"I don't bark orders..." Ruby countered but the pale blue haired man continued.

"And you keep scratching your arm"

Ruby looked down and saw that she was picking at her arm again, she knew it was the same place she always picks and scratches, since its her usual injection spot she uses to get her fix. Seeing this, she quickly drew her hand away and shoved it under as she folded her arms, trapping the offending fingers. "It's a habit..." He just gave a non committal hum as he looked out the windows and checked the compass that was on the dashboard. "What's it to you?"

"If you want to talk, I can listen..." He said simply as he tapped the compass and sighed and began to turn, making everyone shift suddenly.

"There's nothing to talk about" Ruby said with finality. Midori simply shrugged.

"I know you're strong, Rose. You proved that on day one, but even the strongest of us break down at some point, so if you need to get some stuff off your chest you can just talk to me" Ruby just shook her head. Even if she wanted to talk to him, spill her whole story out to him and breakdown like he thought she would, she would not even know where to begin.

When she did no reply, he just shrugged and concentrated of driving through the desert. A more difficult task as it turned out to be, since they kept getting turned around whenever they went over a dune of sand. The rest of the trip was filled with silence as the sun hit its zenith and the town came into view. Stopping and piling out, everyone took up positions outside and waited for orders.

Looking through the scope of her rifle, she saw that the town was much larger than previously suspected. Probably a town that was old and populous enough to become a full fledged city, but for whatever reason, they decided to keep to a more traditional way of life, judging by the lack of taller buildings and modern building material.

From their perch on top of a dune, Ruby could already count four packs of Beowolves and Boarbatusks idly walking around, though what worried her more was the sight of a Beringel lumbering around like it owned the place. Other Grimm moved out of the large gorilla type Grimm as it moved through the groups. Lowering her sniper scythe, she held her hand over her eye as a strong breeze kicked up sand into her face. "That Beringel is going to be a problem..." Ruby began.

"Which one?" Concador asked as he adjusted his scope on his marksmen rifle.

"The big monkey" Midori said as he looked at the scene through his pair of binoculars.

"You fought Grimm before Midori?" The Vacuoan sniper asked.

"I graduated from Shadow primary, but failed the Shade entrance exams three times, so I became regular person who was in the Reserves" He said simply as he lowered the binoculars and looked over at the squad. "So, what's the plan, Rose?"

"We get in, get the Hunters and get out as quickly as possible. Stay close and stay out of my way" She said simply as she double checked her weapon and shouldered it and began to walk down to the town's entrance. Everyone took up positions behind her and broke into a light jog when they
approached the opening in the large wall that surrounded the town. Stacking up at the opening, Ruby was on the left side of the wall and looked around the corner as Tucks, Pixie, Sapphi and Pewit stacked up behind her. On the other side of the large wooden doors was Concador, Alluim and Auburn stacked up behind Midori. With a single nod, everyone filled into the town quietly.

Positions were quickly filled with Ruby leading them, the ones with special tasks and equipment in the middle and the riflemen in the back, watching behind them. As a single unit, moved quietly through the town street, weapons pointed at every possible angle of attack. When they reached the end of the road, Ruby held her hand up and the group stopped for a second to pay attention to her, with a quick gesture of her hand, the nine of them ran down to a building and stacked up once more. Ruby peered around the corner and saw Grimm walking down the street.

"There's four Beowolves and three Boarbatusks just hanging around at the end of the street. We don't know where the Hunters are so we'll need to check everywhere for them" Ruby whispered to them as they formed up around her. Concador taking her position around the corner and keeping tabs on the Grimm. "So chances are, we're going to get into a large scale firefight. Leave the larger Grimm to me and concentrate fire on single targets while aiming for their eyes"

Everyone nodded and got ready, taking deep breaths and psyching themselves up for the coming fight. When everyone was ready, Ruby nodded to Sapphi, who pulled a red shelled grenade from her vest, pulled the pin and ran around the corner to have a clear view at the Grimm, then threw it with all of her strength.

When the grenade exploded, D-squad streamed around the corner and opened fire on the Grimm. The ones who were still standing were simply cut down by large caliber fire from the rifles, When they dropped, they began to run down to the next intersection.

"That'll alert every Grimm to us, we need to keep moving!" Ruby shouted as they all sprinted down the street as all forms of Grimm began to come out of the shadows to try and feast on human flesh. Running and gunning, they went from street to street, trying to find any indication on where the Hunters were held up, but Grimm was all they found. They came to large opening near the centre of the town and saw that they were surrounded.

Taking up a circular defensive position, each member aimed down a road and began to open fire on the approaching Grimm. For every Grimm that fell, two seemed to push past the dissipating corpse and the circle closed in on them, even worse when three people shouted out saying that they were reloading. Quickly looking around, Ruby saw that there was no time to cover everyone who was reloading, so she shouted at everyone to stay down and stop firing. As she called out the command, she did not wait to see if they followed the order before throwing her weapon out and unfolding it into her scythe and flew into the battle.

Using her semblance, she sprinted forward and ducked under a swipe from a Beowolf and brought her blade down to catch the shoulder of one of the other Beowolves behind it and pulled the trigger, flowing with the momentum, she spun in place as her scythe went down and caught the first's thigh and sliced clean through it.

Landing back on her feet, she jumped, dodged and countered against four other Beowolves, lopping off limbs and heads with ease as she ran back to the first, who was crawling along the ground, positioned her weapon at its head and fired, obliterating its head while hurling herself back to the squad and past them to continue the fight. Leaping past the team, she cleaved through another Beowolf as she skidded to a stop.

Finding the next group of hostiles, she quickly ran up to them and slid under the lead's legs and began to dance around it, dodging its attacks while killing off the others as they tried to attack back.
As she danced around to its back, she threw the weapon down and kicked at its trigger to launch the scythe's speartip bottom through a beowolf. Leaping up and over it, she landed on the staff and pinned the Grimm to the ground. With a somersault, she fingered the trigger again and cleaved the creature in half, but before it could hit the ground, the momentum from the shot made the scythe come down once more, cleaving the creature one more before it died fully.

With a flourish, she shoved the tip of her blade into the ground and used it as a platform to stabilise her shots as she picked off charging Grimm in her direction. Looking back, she saw a third group of Grimm coming towards her team. She let a Boarbatusk get close before she pulled the weapon free of the cobblestone street and fired into its face, sending her back to the group. She arrived with a skid and stared down a Beowolf who was about to swipe at her, but a loud howl caught it off guard, letting Ruby to cleave it in half without resistance. Behind the group, she saw the Beringel pound at its chest with its massive black fists.

Knowing that they were going to get nowhere without first taking care of it, she went to charge it, but was quickly caught off guard when it simply grabbed the large curved tusk of a Boarbatusk and simply threw it at her direction. Without anytime to think, the Grimm collided against her, knocking her back to her team. Taking it as their cue, all of them began to open fire on the different streets like before, but Ruby saw that they were quickly going to be overrun if they did not leave this place right now. Taking a quick look around, she saw a church with the doors open. "Take cover in the church! We'll force them into a funnel!" She yelled over the gunfire.

As one, D-squad began to run and fire at the creatures, slowly walking up the steps to the large doors and covering those where were behind. Eventually, they all piled into the old stone building and everyone took aim at the doorway. Ruby watched and waited as the Beringel ran towards the doorway and suddenly stopped. Everyone watched as the face of the creature changed, almost like it was thinking. Suddenly, the Grimm walked away from them. Confused, Ruby looked out and saw the creature walk down the street and began to pick up an abandoned truck and turned around. "BACK!" She shouted as the beast flexed its large muscles and threw the truck like a toy at them.

Everyone dove out of the way as the vehicle slammed into the doorway and shook the whole building, when the dust settled, Ruby looked up and saw half of a destroyed cab was inside the building, effectively blocking off their escape route.

Ruby quickly got to her feet and looked around the damage or anyway she could figure out an escape route, looking through a small enough crack, she saw the Grimm that did this as well as several others that were waiting and watching them. The large ape Grimm suddenly looked back and made a huff as a Grimm she never saw before appeared behind it. It looked like a strange, floating jellyfish. Its head flashed a series of colours before floating away, bringing the Grimm with it.

"What the hell was that all about?" Pixie asked as she inspected the truck.

"Fuck if I know..." Sapphi said as she took the time to take a quick count of how many grenades she had left.

"Do you get the feeling that it lead us into this building and locked the door behind us?" Midori asked as he walked up to Ruby. She simply nodded as she turned away from the wreckage and took stock of the situation. "So, why would it do this and then just leave?" He asked after he peered out the same crack she did. What answered his question was a very low growl that echoed off the high ceiling of the building. Everyone became deathly quiet and aimed in every possible direction, looking for the source of the noise. With a simple gesture from Midori, everyone spread out slowly and checked corners and between the long wooden benches that filled the main room.
As she walked slowly, Ruby noticed something odd. Walking up to a floor panel, it looked like it had large and deep scratch marks under it, but that was the only one, all the other ones around it were repetitively untouched. She was about to inspect it further when someone screamed at the top of their lungs, quickly turning, she saw Pewt aiming upwards and firing to the ceiling. Suddenly, something massive landed on top of him, the largest Grimm she had ever seen. With the soldier under its foot, it looked like a massive Beowolf, only there was almost no black fur visible, it was almost completely covered in bony plates. It stood nearly ten feet tall as it hunched over slightly, the claws at the end of its hands were at least a foot and a half. The same could be said for the claws on its feet, the ones on the right foot were currently shoved through the lower back of the man below it. As he screamed and tried to crawl away, the creature moved a hand in and began to dig into him, his tactical armour doing nothing to stop the Grimm claws.

"NO! GODS NO! HELP ME! SOMEONE HE-"

His screaming stopped as the Grimm simply ripped the person in half and tossed the remains against the wall. With a loud howl, it bared its teeth and dared anyone to challenge it. This thing had to be old, the oldest Grimm she had ever seen. If she had to guess, maybe hundreds of years before the First Great War, maybe even a thousand. At once, everyone lifted their rifles and unloaded everything they had into the beast, but their rounds simply bounced off its bone armour and screamed at them once more. Unfolding her weapon, Ruby charged towards it. Her weapon bouncing off the thick bone armour of its arms, the two of them fought quickly and brutally.

Every attack she made was met with a large armoured arm, she thought that using her semblance would grant her an advantage against such a large enemy and hoped to find a weak spot in its armour, the only thing she found was how fast it was and how easily it could predict her movements. Ruby met a heavy back hand and was thrown across the church, she felt the hard stone against her back and her head bounced off the wall as her aura flashed around her, signalling that she could die, her vision blackening as she slid to the ground and tried to remain conscience. Slowly, she got to her feet and saw that the Ancient Grimm was moving towards the rest of the squad.

She reached behind herself and slipped her finger into the pouch she kept her Aura Stimulate in, she pulled out two small blister packs of a more concentrated dose of the drug. Slipping the backs between her fingers, she slipped the plastic safety caps into her mouth and pulled them off with her teeth, revealing tiny steel needles. Spitting out the caps, she punched her thigh and squeezed the drug into her system once again. Maybe two doses of the concentrated form was a little too much, but she needed all she could get right now. A sharp inhale through her teeth as a cold chill extended from the injection point of her leg and reinvigorated her Aura.

Snapping her eyes open, she reloaded with gravity rounds and caught her second wind with the help of the drug and launched herself between the Grimm and her fellow humans and knocked its hand out the way. Picking up the offensive, she swung and danced around it, blocking all its attacks and even countering some of them. She could feel her heart hammering in her chest as her body tried to keep up with the physical exertion of fighting this thing and such extreme speeds. Needing to end this as quickly as possible, she quickly sped away from it and ran around to attack from its side.

Sliding under its arm, she brought her scythe up and hooked around its neck, causing her to swing up and around it. Pushing her weight into the momentum, Crescent Rose began to carve a groove into the bone platting around its neck and at the apex of her swing, she was near vertical with the ground, she fired a round and felt the steel make a deeper groove into the armour, while spinning, she fired several more shots and finally broke through, cutting off its head and sending her to the
ceiling suddenly.

Holding on tightly, she flew upwards and felt the spear tip dig itself into the painted ceiling of the church. Standing on the blade, she looked down and saw that the large Grimm was already dissipating from its wound she inflicted onto it. Things without a head tend to die pretty quickly. Just as she was about to try and dig out her weapon, a white petal caught her eye, following it, she saw Summer Rose standing before her, a soft, sad smile graced her lips. Ruby stared at her as her mother walked towards her, her steps silent as she walked across the air to stand right in front of her. Slowly, she reached out and gently cupped Ruby's face and tilted her head gently.

Ruby leaned into the gesture and closed her eyes. Her body felt light, her eyes began to droop and her knees began to buckle. "Do you believe in Destiny?" Her mother asked her gently. Ruby had a hard time thinking of an answer, her mind was hazy and she could not think straight, she thought about everything that happened to her and what lead to everything she had done. From her acceptance to Beacon, to her friends and family. From meeting Penny and Pyrrha and watching their deaths. The promise of a life she should have being stolen from her right before her eyes. Finally she opened her eyes and stared her mother in the face and spoke her answer.

"Not anymore..."

Her vision went black and her body went limp, the last thing she saw was her mother's disappointed look.

And Ruby Rose fell.

Chapter End Notes

Welcome back everyone! I'm so glad to be done with the holiday season so I can concentrate on writing again!

I want to thank each and everyone of you for enjoying my story so far and hope the next arc with meet or exceed your expectations.

I cannot tell you how much I appreciate watching the hit counter constantly climb up over the break, it felt so good knowing people would go out of their way to find my story.

This chapter is brought to you by a song called The Drug Pt.1 From Egypt Central go check them out!

On that note, I hope everyone had a happy holiday and if you enjoyed this story, please leave a Kudo, if you liked it a lot, please leave a comment with praise or salt and as always, thank you for taking the time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness.
**The Beast In the Beauty Pt: I**

Chapter Notes

Guess what movies I've been marathoning lately...

**The Beast In The Beauty**

*Pt: I*

The crunch of snow echoed inside of her sensitive faunus ears as Blake trudged her way through the barren, Atlas tundra. Another gust of wind pushed her coat and hair past her body as snow attacked her bare skin, sending another shiver down her numb spine. Despite the sun being high in the sky, it was barely after five in the morning. She figured she was much further north than Atlas city since the sun had rose at three thirty in the Dust damned morning! When she left for the ship, Blake took a few moments to explore the surrounding area she was in, the best idea she had was that Raven had taken her to an abandoned mining town.

The reason it was abandoned was lost to her, the Dust drying up was her best idea at the time, but she had a lot of time to think about it while she walked through the blowing snow. So far, she had thought up four ideas of what happened to the people of the town, including Grimm attack and a gas leak. With a heavy sigh, Blake pulled her coat tighter around herself, her current outfit was more than enough for summers in Vale and Vacuo, but the Menagerie born woman was not prepared for how permanently cold Atlas would be.

With her jacket being held closed with one hand, and her other holding the case with Yang's arm close, she pushed through the wind and snow to continue on her way.

Blake felt like she had been marching through the snow for much longer than she probably had been, but eventually she made her way to the top of a snow dune that hid a limitless grey ocean. Floating next to a large pier was a much larger ship with people loading up large crates by hand and stowing them away in the belly of the naval vessel. With a sigh of relief, she began to make her way towards the large ship, glad to be able to get out of the cold.

When she arrived on the wooden platform, a taller man with a great white beard and matching hair and eyebrows was waiting for her. He had his hands behind his back and stood ready to greet her, as she got closer, she could see the golden embroidery on his dark jacket and white captain's hat made him stand out as the commanding officer of the ship. When she got close enough, he took off his hat and gave a light bow to the woman before smiling at her.

"Ms. Black, I presume" He said with a thick accent that people often associated with stories of pirates and rouges of the sea. Blake nodded lightly as she looked around at the crew who were moving large crates onto the deck. "I am Captain Bronze, and this is the Shaded Galley. Let's get you on board then and get something warm inside ya" Blake looked at the ship with a careful eye. It seemed like it was out of place hauling large amount of crates, but if it got her to Mistral and to Yang, she did not care of it was a luxury cruiser or a dingy, as long as it sailed.
With that, they walked up the gangway and up onto the deck. While Blake had to take careful steps to not lose her balance as the ship swayed and bobbed with the waves, the Captain seemed to unhindered. When he noticed that Blake had to hold onto the railing a few times, he laughed, saying that she will get her sea legs eventually. While they walked, Blake noticed that all the crates that they had been loading had the Schnee Dust Company logo painted on all of them. She did no mention it, figuring that she would have more than enough time on her voyage to ask questions.

Eventually, they made it to a large room filled with benches and tables, on the far side of the room was an unused buffet line. Inside the kitchen, there was three men in the same white and blue striped shirt busying themselves with starting breakfast for the crew, the Captain simply grabbed a mug and poured grabbed two packets from a self nearby. "Tea or coffee?" He asked lightly. When she replied with tea, he opened one of the packets and pulled a tea bag from it and filled the cup and dried herbs with hot water. It was not going to be the best tea she has ever had, but at least it was going to be warm.

With the warm liquid in hand, the Captain showed her to her room since the last of the crates were loaded up and they were ready to set sail. Below her feet, she felt the engines start up as everything began to vibrate. Sitting on the bed, she felt the whole thing began to slowly move. The slow turn made Blake latch onto the bolted down bed frame to stop her from skidding into the wall, when everything was settled, she finally relaxed some and took in the room she was staying in. For a smuggling ship, the room was much nicer than she was expecting.

A single bed with a pillow, the nightstand was bolted down and a window that faced out to the grey waters. Figuring that the tiny closet was a safe enough place for the arm and the pack that Raven gave her, she settled down on the bed and closed her eyes. With what little sleep she got while in the abandoned mining town and the frozen march to the ship, all of her energy was sapped from her body and she fell asleep to the gentle rocking of the ship seconds after laying her head onto the pillow.

When she woke up next, the sun was still out, but it was visibly lower on the horizon. A grumble from her stomach signalled that she needed some food, she pushed herself to her feet and stumbled a bit, still trying to figure out how to walk on a ship, she walked out of her room and began to wonder the halls, trying to remember where the mess hall was. Following the smell of cooking food, she walked into the large room and saw that a number of people were already eating the prepared lunch from the cooks. Some toasted sandwiches and some sort of soup from what she could tell.

When she walked in, all eyes were on her, she knew why. She was the only person on this ship that was not part of the crew, so no one knew her. She collected a sandwich and skipped the soup to eat her meal outside while leaning on the railing and watched the endless waves pass by. "So what's your story?" Blake turned around quickly and gripped the handle of her weapon. The Captain hand his hands up in surrender, letting her know he had no weapons. "Sorry, I didn't mean to startle you" He smiled warmly when she removed her hand and turned back to face the water.

"I don't have a story" She said simply as she finished the last of the sandwich. He just gave a knowing hum as he rested his forearms on the railing and leaned against it.

"Everyone has a story"

"You wouldn't want to hear it"

A silence lingered between the two of them, the gentle lapping of the ocean against the hull of the ship filling the silence before she spoke again. "I wouldn't expect the guest quarters on a smuggler's ship to be so accommodating"
"aye" He began with a nod. "I used to ferry people from place to place before the war. When the Fall first happened, I moved refugees out of Vale to Mistral and Menagerie, whoever would take them. But then the war broke out and no one travelled anywhere. Eventually, me and the crew were forced to convert her from a passenger vessel into a smugglers and we went from there. Luckily for us, there was no shortage of people looking for supplies and don't care where it comes from"

"So you're pirates" Blake said finally.

"Of course not!" He replied, obviously offended "I said we were smugglers, not pirates"

"I don't see much of a difference. You both lie, you cheat and you steal in order to get the most profit"

"We don't steal, Ms.Black. We ship goods and supplies that people would otherwise like to go unannounced by the authorities. Speaking of which..." Blake looked over in the direction that the Captain was staring off and saw a another ship heading towards them from behind. Blake followed the Captain to the bridge where be began to call out orders to everyone who was busy working. One of the crew men stood up from their console and addressed him, the headset he was wearing was pressed to one of his ears.

"Sir! We hasn't received any communication from the vessel. It's currently gaining speed and approaching from behind!. We are attempting to raise communication with them"

"Belay that!" The Captain bellowed out. "Starboard lookout, what colours are they flying?" Blake looked over to a man who was currently looking through a set of binoculars at the ship that was approaching.

"None, Sir! Wait! There's something on the bow of the their ship!" He slowly lowered the binoculars, his eyes wide with horror and his skin paled in seconds. "It's the White Fang, sir"

"Blast the damned beasts. Everyone to level one battle stations!" Everyone scrambled to their stations as an alarm blared out through the intercom that ran through the whole ship. "Ms.Black, we are about to meet some real pirates, so your assistance would be greatly appreciated"

"What do you need me to do?" She asked as the Captain took up his position at the wheel and gripped the handles on it.

"Follow the first mate down to the armoury and get ready to repel the attack! You need to buy enough time so that I can get us out of here!"

With a nod, Blake followed the first mate, a woman with short brown hair and light caramel skin with an orange bandanna tied around her neck nodded to the Captain as she lead Blake through the halls of the ship and towards the back. Running down a flight of stairs, they passed a few holds where the crates that were brought on and in the middle of being repainted to carry the Mistrali crest when they reached an already opened door, where other crew members were already loading up. The first mate handed her a rifle and a few magazines of ammunition for it.

Blake quickly loaded up and made sure everything was set before following the crew up onto the deck, the White Fang ship was much closer now and she could see the logo that was painted onto the front of the hull in red paint. On the deck of the other ship, Blake saw members of the White Fang wearing the Grimm masks. What terrified her more was the bodies that hung off the protruding pole from the front ship. Three bodies swayed with the ocean, suspended by their necks and their hands tied behind their backs. She could not tell if they were members of the old crew of that ship or faunus betrayers, no features could be seen on the bodies.
Bloody, broken and falling apart, she knew that the White Fang had changed, but to see this, this was a step too far. A chilling thought entered her mind, did they used paint to make that White Fang crest on the ship, or did they use blood. Blake was then very glad that she was upwind.

Orders were being shouted out and Blake followed them to the best of her ability. Below her, she saw the cannons being slipped through holes and poised to fire at the faunus extremists. Her heart was pounding under her breast, she did not like the idea of fighting on the sea. On land, if things went bad, she could deploy a clone and escape with her life, but out in the middle of the ocean, there was no where to go, it was either victory or death. Kneeling down, she took aim at the coming enemy and focused her faunus sight on lining up a shot with the first person she saw.

Before she could pull the trigger, the cannon below her fired its shot at the ship and she lost her footing. The space between the ships was quickly filled with wood chips, cannon fire and bullets, making her flinch and duck under the incoming fire. She felt the ship shake when they retaliated and opened up holes on the hull. She popped up from behind her cover and fired a few rounds from the rifle at the ship, downing two people before ducking again.

With a sigh, she tossed the rifle to the floor and pulled out Gambol Shroud and cocked back the slide to load a round before jumping back up and firing at them again. She preferred the more familiar feel of the handgun configuration of her weapon rather than some standard issue rifle.

Another round of cannon fire ripped through the Shaded Galley and the first mate cursed as she reloaded her rifle. "Fuck! We need to disable their cannons"

"I'm on it!" Pooling her Aura around her, she waited for a break in the fighting before getting to her feet suddenly and leaping out into the air. Forming a clone at her feet, she used it to springboard herself the rest of the way. Rolling to her feet, she pulled out her weapon and easily aimed for the members of the White Fang. Her brothers and sisters by her faunus heritage, and she cut them down with bullet and blade with ease.

The deck was slick with blood, so she watched her footing as she made her way to an opening that lead deeper into the ship, just as another group of White Fang members came out to engage her, so she threw her weapon out and pulled on the ribbon, causing it to fire in random directions, changing the momentum of the weapon as Blake swung it around as she leapt into the air. The blade sliced flesh apart as bullets created holes in bodies, when she landed, another seven people were dead by her hand.

Charging down the stairs, she held the sheath in a reversed grip and the handgun at the ready. She made her way to the end of the deck, those who tried to stop her were easily cut down, blood splashed against her face as it dripped off her coat. The stench of the dead assaulting her sensitive nose. The walls and floor were stained with dried blood from when the White Fang took over, blood and bowels wafting towards her made her gag, but she carried on. She could mourn the dead when she was on her way to Mistral. From the far side of a hallway, she saw a large, muscled man walking towards her.

His chocolate skin glistening with sweat as he brandished a war-hammer that would make Nora blush. He pulled on the weapon and it transformed into a large cannon that he carried with both hands. Blake had only a few seconds before a large cannonball ripped through the hall right at her. Jumping over the projectile, she sprinted towards the large man with her weapon unfolding into its katana form and spun into a double slash, only for it to be blocked when he pulled his weapon up to block his chest. Using her speed to her advantage, she let loose a flurry of slashes swings against the man and drove him further back into the tight hallway.

With a sudden duck of his massive arm, she brought her blade against his inner thigh and he cried
out, his aura beginning to flash a deep green as her clone took a heavy kick to the face, letting
Blake slide under his legs and brought her blades down against the insides of his knees, dropping
him onto his knees, and with a final kick to the side of his head, his skull bounced off the metal
wall and he landed on his stomach. His mask in pieces all over the ground. The ship she was on
shook as another volley of cannon fire connected from the Shaded Galley and she heard the tell
tale sign of the White Fang retaliation. She needed to hurry.

Running down the hallway, she went down another deck and found herself in a large open area,
along each side of the area where the cannons that were being reloaded at a rapid pace. She quickly
took aim with her pistol and downed unarmed members. The first did not even see her coming,
with a clean shot to the back of his head, his brains splattered the thick steel of his cannon as his
body fell to the floor.

His partner saw this and could not get up from his crouched position before two shots to the chest
painted the wall behind him. This gave the others enough time to pull weapons from holders near
by and tried to attack her, but like their ship mates, whatever aura they might have had did nothing
against her Dust rounds. The last member tried to run away, only to be shot in the back, his body
skidded across the floor, smearing crimson until he stopped. With the crewmen dead, the canons
laid silent.

Looking through a gunport, she saw that the Shaded Galley was heavily damaged. Smoke billowed
out from her backside and a few holes with fire in them could be seen. Blake was about to clear the
rest of the ship with an deep, angered yell came from behind her. She did not have enough time to
dodge the attack and was crushed between a cannon and the massive war hammer of the man she
thought she took care of already.

Before he could hit her with the hammer again, she dodged out of the way and rolled to a kneel.
She could feel her Aura trying to reset her ribs, she knew from the sharp pains from her breaths that
she had at least one broken rib, and if they were not, they were most certainly cracked. The dark
skinned man had a bloodied face, his goat eyes staring her down as he gritted his teeth.

Blood running down his legs as he limped towards her, fighting through the pain. "Tonight, you
die" He said simply as he walked towards her slowly. She jumped to her feet and dodged another
swing of his war hammer fighting through her own pain. While in the corridor, he did not have the
space to swing his hammer, but down here, there was nothing stopping him and he took full
advantage of that.

Rolling and dodging out of the way, her only saving grace was from the way he attacked her
reckless abandon. Blake was doing her best to avoid getting hit by the weapon, but she could not
get close to him since he chained all his attacks into the next, a cyclone of flesh and steel. Dodging
out of the way from a heavy overhead swing, she slashed across his large chest and earned a heavy
back hand for her efforts. She landed hard and watched as the hammer was pulled from the hole
the head made, from the corner of her eye, she saw the SDC logo on some of the crates in the deck
below her and an idea formed in the pit of her mind.

Rolling out of the way as another heavy, overhand swing tried to kill her, she rolled to her feet and
began to keep her distance. Staying just out of reach of his hammer before running around to the far
end of the desk, firing her weapon to keep his guard up. Fed up with her strategy, he changed the
form of his weapon again to the cannon and began to fire at her, with her speed, she easily dipped
and dodged the projectiles as they sped towards her and cut through the internals of his own ship.

Seeing her moment, she ran straight towards the hole he had created from his hammer and slipped
down inside of it and landing on the deck below, positioning herself just right she waited and saw
the main aim his cannon down the hole at her with a smile on his face. Just as he fired, Blake
dodged out of the way as the cannonball went past her head and straight into the stockpile of Dust
they had put there.

The cannonball shattered the crates and broke open the volatile contents. Blake took a moment to
watch as bolts of lightning and sparks of flame began to stir, ice formed and was swallowed up by
small pile of earth, elements combining and feeding off each other to become a maelstrom of
wraith. She jumped to the deck above her through the hole and began to run as fast as she could to
the upper decks and to safety. Just as she ran through the opening and into sunlight, she heard a
series of explosions and ran to the bow of the ship and jumped onto the railing when everything
went up in flames and a deafening explosion.

A massive fire storm with lighting and chunks of ice flying through it ripped through the heart of
the vessel and sent her flying out from the shock wave. Using Gambol Shroud, she fired her
weapon at the Shaded Galley and felt it wrap around the railing. Landing in the water, she began to
pull herself away from the calamity she created and up onto desk with the help of one of the
crewmen. After she thanked him, she looked back at her handiwork. Bodies bobbed against the
water's surface, some of them were swimming towards floating chunks of ship while others tried to
swim towards the vessel that was not on fire, begging to be brought on board.

The White Fang vessel had become a hurricane of elemental power that rivalled the books and
legends she had read about. Reaching to the heavens, the thunderous booms echoed through the
sudden silence that followed the battle. She could see large silhouettes of massive chunks of earth
and ice flying around the eye of the storm. Fire warred against water as the twister began to expand
slowly. Blake took a deep breath and leaned on the railing, willing her body to stop shaking from
the frigid cold from the waters below and the adrenaline slowly leaving through her system.
soaked to the bone, she began to untangle her weapon from the railing when the Captain's voice
whispered behind her.

"What have you done..." The man was staring at the carnage with a horrid shock on his face. He
gripped the railing in front of him and shook his head.

"I took care of the White Fang" Blake said between breaths.

"Aye, that you did. But when man has fallen on the tears of the Gods, Devils comes to feast on
their souls..."

A scream caught Blake's attention. Looking over the side, she saw the ripples and bubbles of where
someone one floated. Another scream, and Blake watched as another White Fang member was
pulled down to the depths. Then another, and another. The consequences of Blake's actions
clicking in her mind. She had just doomed dozens of men and woman to a watery death, so much
pain, misery and anguish concentrated in one area could only mean one thing. Blake held her
breath as she gripped her weapon tighter and watched as large waves began to attack the ship,
shaking the entire thing.

Suddenly, several dark figures began to climb up the hull of the ship and pulled themselves onto
the desk. The remaining members of the crew began to open fire on the creatures, sending them
back to the dark depths from where they came. From the water, another one jumped all the way
over the railing and landed hard on the deck before her.

Its skin was black, in the light of the sun and the shine from the water, it highlighted that its skin
was actually several thousand tiny black scales. Its arms were long and and tipped with long white
claws, between each of its fingers, it had thin red webbing that let it swim faster in the water. Along
its back, she could see the white bone spine and ribs poking through its black skin, the bone
armour was tipped off with a long, red dorsal fin that ran the entire length of its back. Its legs had more bone armour and its feet had more of the webbing between long toes.

It's head was long and thin with tendrils of black that hung off its jaw, the familiar bone white skull with red markings that Grimm always had. Its glowing red eyes stared into Blake's soul as it flexed its fingers and snapped its jaw shut a few times. What was attacking them were Ràn-Beowolves. Grimm that lived and hunted in the ocean and large bodies of water. It opened its mouth and let out a gargled, blood chilling roar.

And Blake Belladonna was afraid.

Chapter End Notes

This Chapter's song is You're Mine From Disturbed.

The next Chapter is out after a fight with Writer's block, hurrah!

With that, the next chapter is up and I want to thank everyone for reading, we're almost at 200 Kudos and I can't get over that, I wish I could thank each of you for that, but I can't. I can, however reply to comments! So comment and I will thank you personally! (As personally as it get...)

If you liked, please leave a kudo, if you want to talk about it, leave a comment and I will get back to you, I promise. And as always, thank you for reading my slice of madness.
Yang woke with a small gasp, she stared at the ceiling for a few seconds before sighing heavily and closed her eyes tightly, the ever present headache thumping against her skull. She opened her eyes finally and slowly tried to get out of the bed she had been given for the night when something did not feel right to her. While still only half awake, she looked down at her body to try and figure out why it was so hard to get out of bed, the problem presented itself in the form of Neo sleeping on top of her.

Her pink and brown head nestled deeply between her breasts, her breaths gently blowing on her skin. Before she could question the woman, memories of last night flooded her head. Neo crawling on top of her, her kisses, her fingers, the way she played Yang's body like a fiddle. She let out a frustrated groan as she palmed her face and shook her head.

Good job, Yang. You fucked her.

With gentle nudging and dexterity she did not know she had, Yang managed to slip out from under the still sleeping Neo and stretched her back slightly. He Si Xiong was right, that bed was just perfect for her. Being too lazy and tired to slip her clothing on, Yang simply grabbed the opened bottle from last night and read the label. While she did not know what the main language was, she recognised bourbon, with a shrug, she downed a mouthful as she walked towards the bathroom to get a shower and clean up a bit before meeting up with Emerald, knowing that she would have a few choice words for her if she were to be late at all.

Setting the dark bottle on the counter, she looked up at the large mirror that hung above the sink. It was six feet wide and the top was probably two feet above her head. The counter top itself was made out of some kind of dark stone with white speckles inside the material with the sink carved into the middle of it. A soap dispenser and a two small cups sat next to it, one of them had a couple of different tooth brushes inside of it.

Looking at herself in the mirror, Yang's eyes normally look at the scared over stump that was her right arm first. Instead, her lilac eyes were dragged down to the series of darkening bruises and bite marks that marred her chest. Letting out a frustrated sigh, she gently traced a few of them and felt the small indents in her skin from her teeth. Last night flashed through her mind again and she tried to push it away, but it kept coming back to her, like a moth drawn to a flame.

Her body, her touch, her lips. It stirred something inside of her body and it was not just pure lust. Shaking the lingering idea from her mind, she slammed back another mouthful of the foul liquid before walking to the shower area of the bathroom. A frosted glass door slid to the side as she turned on the water and began to adjust the heat for herself before stepping into it fully and letting the water cleanse her of the night before.

For a man like Junior, he had a surprising amount of feminine hair products and body wash, something told her that the twins crashed at him place more often than not, she did not want to
think about the reasoning why. As she stood under the hot water, her hair sticking to her back and neck, she thought back to Neo. Apparently, that is the only thing she is going to be thinking about this morning. Why would she do this, go through all the trouble to get her wound up and sleep with her, what could she possible benefit could the shorter woman gain from sleeping with Yang? A thousand ideas popped into her mind, but not one of them seemed to line up to why she would go through all the trouble to have a one night stand with her.

Maybe she actually likes you?

The voice in her head popped up suddenly. Did she? Could she? Did Neo, the woman who tried to kill her on a speeding train, the person who sided with Roman Torchwick and helped cause the collapse of the Kingdom of Vale, really like her? The idea did not make her skin crawl as much as she thought it would. Yang reflected on the last few days she had spent with the smaller woman, not once did she show any ill will towards her, all she did was help her. Escaping Patch and Mercury, helping her wash her clothes in the lake, trying to help her eat, everything she did was for her, Neo wanted her to be happy. She actually wanted to be with Yang. The way she gently woke her up in the mornings, the soft smiles she would give her whenever their eyes met, it was almost like a cheesy romance story from tv or one of Blake's stories.

Anger flared through her body, the thought of the woman brought her blood to a boil as she gritted her teeth. Why, why would Blake abandon her like that, without a reason or even a word she ran away. After breaking through the barriers she put up, Yang thought their relationship was going to take off, but then the White Fang attacked and she lost her arm trying to protect Blake, but even through her sacrifice, she was abandoned, just like everyone else she ever loved.

Suddenly, a pair of hands were pressed against her back, she jumped slightly at first, but as they gently slipped over her hips, she could feel a form pressing against her body. The second pair of hands linked with each other as a gentle pair of lips pressed feather kisses across her back. For a brief moment, all of Yang's angry faded away and her mind blanked. She was just enjoying the warmth and touch of another person for a few seconds before she realised who was holding her from behind.

Turning to face the woman in question, Yang took a step back to get a full look at her. Without her heeled boots, Neo's height came up to her own breasts, a surprising bust size for such a small woman as well, her body toned and flexible that came with her fighting style. Flat, toned stomach, a small waist with wide hips. All of her dimensions were like Yang's, only smaller. Neo tilted her head slightly, a small smile creeping across her lips as her brown and pink eyes shifted sides as she did not hide the fact that she was checking out Yang's body, soaking in the sight now that it was in front of her.

When their eyes met, Neo shifted her stance slightly and crossed her arms under her breasts, pushing them up for her, an eyebrow popping up, a silent question lingered in the air and Yang was debating it as the shower water soothingly bounced off the back of her head.

She wants you. She likes you and she wants you.

Do you like her?

That was the million lien question. Did Yang like Neo? Her mind raced through her fight with her on the train, how she saved Roman when she destroyed his mech. That smirk as she sat on the crate and taunted her. How she hugged her when Emerald fucked with her mind, the soft smiles and gentle touches when they camped. Her fingers moving through her hair gently, the way her lips moved against hers. Everything that Neo had done, Yang wanted Blake to do for her.
Blake is gone. A voice in her head told her sternly. She is gone and Neo is here. She was there on Patch, on the water at the lake, next to you every night and with you last night. You're not chained to Blake, you never have been. This could be a new start with someone who actually wants you.

But she's not Blake. A small, sad voice chimed in.

Yang waited a few moments, sorting out her feelings for both women and took a deep breath. "If this is going to continue, there's going to be a few rules" Yang began. "First. This, stops" She gestured to the bite and love marks that Neo left on her skin. "I'm okay with biting, but nothing that's going to be there for a few days" Neo pouted lightly, puffing her cheeks out like a child before shrugging and giving her a small smile, agreeing with the first rule.

"Second. You will never pull my hair under any circumstances" Yang stood up to her full height and stared down at her, even missing one arm, with the way she spoke and the seriousness in her face, she made an intimidating person be be around. Neo quickly nodded to the second rule, knowing full well that if she was in a position to pull her hair, that there would be no time to escape before Yang could follow through with the unspoken threat.

With that done, Yang went onto the next one. "Lastly. You will. Never. Be. Her" Yang punctuated her words with light pokes to her shoulder. Neo stared into her eyes and smiled with a slow nod. Yang nodded with her, the agreement was struck and she took a breath before moving her hand from her shoulder to her neck as she leaned over slightly to capture the smaller woman's lips on her own. The shower lasted much longer than it should have after that, Yang craving a human touch, a need to be wanted.

The two of them finally left the shower after raiding Junior's toiletries for an unused disposable razor, Neo helped her shave her legs and her more private areas before drying off and putting their clothing back on. Just before they left the room, bed unmade and her empty bottle of bourbon left in the bathroom, Neo reached up, gripped the front of her shirt and pulled her down for a quick kiss. A strange comfort came over Yang as she let herself be pulled down to Neo's level and pressed her lips against hers, but it was not an unwelcome one.

Leaving the loft, the two women walked down the set of stairs that lead back to the main floor, several of Junior's men were getting things ready for the night, the man himself and his mother were sitting at the bar discussing something. When the pair were noticed, He Si waved them over holding an envelope in her hand. "This is for you" She said when they got there. Yang handed it to Neo, who opened it and inspected what was contained inside. Written letters with three forged identification cards that were very well made.

Happy with what they got, Neo slipped the whole thing inside of her jacket and nodded in appreciation towards the club owners. Yang thanked them for what they had done for them and went to leave when He Si asked to speak to Yang privately, she nodded to Neo, motioning that it would be fine before the smaller woman winked and left, knowingly shaking her hips.

"It would seem that you have enjoyed your night, Yang Xiao Long" The older woman stated with a knowing smile on her face.

"Remind me to burn my bed later..." Junior said lightly

"If you're going to be burning things, might want to burn your shower as well" Yang added, earning her an eye roll from the man before he moved away to get other things ready. When they were alone, Yang turned to He Si Xiong and shook her head lightly.

"Why would you go through all that trouble for us? What do you get out of it?"
The woman simply shrugged and stuck the long pipe in her mouth and exhaled smoke from her nose. "I told you. It was for the fight last night. You are a very talented person, Yang Xiao Long. Even if your wing is missing" Yang just shrugged and made a noise as she leaned in on the table. "When was the last time you had a good fight?" She asked finally. Yang thought about it for a few long seconds. Her fight with Cardin Winchester was not satisfying, not in the slightest.

A small pang of guilt settled in her stomach, remembering the feeling of her hand around his throat, the crack of his neck under her palm had felt good, she had taken another life, not out of survival but out of fury, but it did not quench the rage that flowed through her body. It was only when Emerald dressed Neo up like Ruby, did her anger flicker out. Once again, Neo entered her mind and she felt herself calm down slightly.

"Not for a long time, before the Fall and the war, when I was whole. You were probably the only one in the last while I could actually let loose a little bit. You have a crazy semblance, by the way"

He Si looked at her with a confused look on her face. "What do you think my Semblance is?" She asked lightly. When Yang said that she thought her semblance was the ghostly shell she used, the old woman laughed gently. "That is not my Semblance, Yang Xiao Long. What you saw was my Aura"

"How could that be your Aura? it was outside of you..."

"That form, is how my Aura remembers me. Time has not been kind to me, I shrunk and became smaller, but my Aura fills the form of what I used to be" Yang nodded slowly, thinking about the fight between them and was about to ask more questions when a yell got her attention.

"There you are!" Looking back, Emerald was storming towards her, a pack over her shoulders while Neo stood behind her, carrying another pack and the large duffle bag filled with their money. "In case you forgot, we're kinda running away from Mercury and his group of assholes so they don't kill us all" When Yang turned around to face her, Emerald's eyes looked down and eyed up a few of the dark marks that was on her exposed area on her chest. The dark skinned woman blinked a few times and shook her head.

"Un-fucking-believable. While I had to get a shitty room at the shitty inn, you were living the lap of luxury getting laid...Lets just go" She finished her rant with a tired sigh as she pinched the bridge of her nose. Yang stood from her stool and took the large bag from Neo before the three of them left the club and the town behind them. The sun was bright and warm on her skin, the tied knot of her jacket lightly flapping in the light breeze.

"Here" Emerald said as she held out the flask that Qrow had given her last night. A think band of yellow leather with an imprint of her symbol in black ink. Taking it, Yang shook it lightly and heard the sloshing of the liquid inside of it. "Don't just down it, you're only getting a top up every few days." Emerald began to walk past her as Yang stared down at the flask in hand. Popping the top and taking a sip, she let the burning liquid flow down her throat, she could already feel her headache receding as the alcohol made its way through her body.

"Thanks," Yang said finally as she pocketed the flask and caught up to Emerald.

"Yeah well. You suck when you're drunk and you're a massive bitch when you're sober..."

"No...thank you. For Patch and everything"

Emerald just looked at her and studied her for a few moments, trying to figure out if the than were genuine or not. Finally, she nodded and nudged her head in the direction of the road. "Come
on, it's going to be a few days before we hit Port of Arrow" With that, the three of them continued their journey eastward.

True to her word, Emerald refused to fill up the flask when Yang did not pay attention to how much she was drinking and emptied her entire flask within two days. She wondered how Qrow managed to make his last so long, but figured that he filled up at every town or had several on him at all times. Though the effects from not drinking would have been bad, it was not as bad as they could have been without Neo staying by her side, never leaving. Even going so far as to sneak her way into Yang's sleeping bag, an intimate moment being interrupted when Emerald caught them when she returned with an arm full of wood for the fire. Telling them to take it somewhere else, so they did by hiding behind a few trees.

On the third day, they arrived in another small town. Much smaller than Jade, the town of Grey Rock had seemed much less lively than any town usually was. There were much no people walking around, a few could be seen inside of windows but were quickly hidden away when they closed the blinds. Yang had a bad feeling that they were not welcomed out here. "Maybe we should skip this town..." Emerald said gently as she looked around at the other people. Simply getting what they needed and continuing without staying for the night would have sucked, having a bed would be good, even better with some privacy, but the vibe she got from the people was enough for forgo that small bit of luxury. At the very least, maybe she could sneak away from Emerald and get her flask refilled at a tavern.

When they walked into the town middle of town, all three of them stood still and froze at the person who was sitting at the fountain. The fountain more like a large pool with sizeable rocks surrounding it, tall enough to use as a bench, a pillar of water shot out from the middle to bath the whole area in the sounds of water splashing against each other. The person that was sitting on a rock in front of them was busy looking at his scroll, watching a video when he noticed them finally. Mercury closed the device and stood up slowly, adjusted his black leather jacket and dusted off the shoulder before narrowing his eyes at them. He cleared his throat and ran his hand through his hair and gave them a smirk. "Ladies" He said as he adjusted his cuff lightly.

"Mercury..." Emerald said quietly as he began to stroll towards them. The packs were dropped and Emerald reached behind her for her weapons, Neo's umbrella found its place in her hand and Yang's Ember Celica extended up her arm, ready for a fight. Looking around, she did not see any of the people that Mercury brought with him to Patch was there.

"Where's your friends?" Yang asked as she took a few steps to the side, Neo mirroring her movements on the other side of Emerald.

Mercury just shrugged and watched her. "Don't know, don't care." He said simply as he looked back at Emerald. "Told you, Em. She'd make an example out of you, and I'm here to deliver"

"You're kinda out numbered, Merc. How are you planning on doing that?"

"Well, Em, if you had stayed you would have also gotten Salam's gift" He lifted his hand and balled it into a fist. Yang watched as black veins began to poke out of his skin and began to crawl its way up his neck and everywhere else he had exposed skin. With a smirk, he suddenly moved and was in front of him, his foot coming out and connecting to Emerald's stomach and sent her flying down the road with a bang from his greaves. He swung his leg around and jumped into the air before his heel came down and Yang blocked it with her weapon, only to receive a kick to her own stomach from his other foot and she fell to the ground. Rolling onto her feet she saw Neo was fairing better than either one of them, dodging and blocking with her umbrella and slashing with the hidden blade it housed. The two danced around each other until Yang sprinted back to the fight.
Her and Neo synchronised quickly with each other. Neo flipped and moved around Yang, distracting and blocking Mercury’s attacks while Yang pummelled him with her only fist. With Emerald getting back up and joining in with her bladed revolvers, their opponent quickly found himself overwhelmed and shot out with his legs. A blast kicked Yang back and he used the momentum to catch Neo off guard and sent her flying. With a quick dodge from Emerald’s blades, he connected a roundhouse kick to her knee, dropping her onto her back and a shot sent her away again.

With no one to stop him, he quickly closed the gap between Yang and himself with a jump and an onslaught of kicks and punches, forcing her to be on the defensive. Backing up to give herself more room to block, she quickly became backed up against a building when he kicked her arm out of the way and lifted her up into the air by her throat, choking her against the building.

With her feet no longer on the ground, the air in her lungs began to burn quickly as he gave out a laugh. "Give up and accept an easy death, Yang!" He chuckled lightly. The black veins continuing to grow across his face. "I'm stronger and faster now, I let you hit me during the tournament! Now, I'm unstoppable!" Blackness began to swarm her vision as her body struggled to suck in air. Her arm went limp and her legs stopped fighting against him.

Suddenly, she was dropped to her knees and she forced air into her lungs with a sharp inhale and a coughing fit. Looking up, she saw Mercury's leg was pulled away from her by a green chain that was wrapped around his ankle. Following it, she saw Emerald pulling on her weapon, trying to get him away from her. With a violent kick, he pulled the weapon from her hand and closed in on them with a shot from his greaves.

Left alone and trying to catch her breath, she watched as Mercury ran around, dodging the shots from Emerald as Neo came up from his blind side and began her attack anew. She dodged and flipped around him again, but when his kick was about to connect to her body, she would shatter into glass and reappear behind him to slash at his body. Yang coughed hard and saw her yellow Aura flash over her body, she was so much weaker now, years of minimal food and too much to drink degraded her muscles and reflexes to a point of being close to useless.

She slowly got to her feet as he dodged an attack from Neo and kicked the legs out from under Emerald. While she was up in the air, he came down with a shot from her boots and drove his steel toed boot into her temple to make her head bounce off the stone ground. Green flashed over her body as her Aura failed her and she groaned out slowly and tried to rise.

Neo picked up the offensive and shattered around him as she tried to take him out. He predicted where she was going to be next and kicked out into the air, shattering the illusionary glass and sent Neo sliding across the ground and hitting the rocks that formed the fountain. As she tried to get up, he quickly ran to her and stomped down on her ankle before she could slash at him with her blade. Her eyes shot wide open as he pressed down on her knee and fired a shot into her body, causing her Aura to flash pink and fail.

Anger flared through Yang's body as she stood up and took a deep breath. The flame in her soul igniting as her eyes turned red and her hair to flame up. "NEO!" She screamed out and sprinted towards Mercury. She threw her arm out and fired a shot from her wrist and sent her spiraling towards the man who was hurting her with a scream.

Seeing this, he did a short run and jumped into the air and kicked her arm out of the way and kicked her in the chest, causing her to fly backwards. Rolling back up to her feet a few meters away, she went to try and unleash her fury on him again when he jumped lightly and kicked out towards her, firing a shot at her. Her body jumped lightly when it made hit her and tore through the
little bit of Aura she had left and tear out her insides. Yang froze as her body began to bleed heavily.

Holding onto her wound, she looked down and saw a crimson flow bloom across her orange top, staining her father's jacket. A look of confusion as her body began to turn cold. Her knees buckled and she slipped to the ground slowly. The world around her became muted as she looked up and saw Neo staring at her and tried to run towards her, only to get pulled back by her hair as Mercury yanked hard on it. Yang heard her own ragged breaths as her strength was failing her. Falling onto her stomach, her life blood began to pool around her, pouring out of her body.

She watched as Neo struggled against Mercury's grasp, only to fold in on herself when Mercury kicked her in the stomach. Emerald tried to fire at him but missed three times as he walked towards her and kicked the gun from her grasp. Yang could feel her body dying, she had failed everyone around her. She failed her sister, her father, Weiss, Blake, Neo, Emerald. Everyone who had depended on her for anything, she had failed.

Her brain knew that this was the end, and began to play back the happy memories it has saved over her life. The first time she saw baby Ruby in the cradle, the way she giggled and smiled at her with bright, silver eyes. Helping Ruby reach the top of the fridge to steal cookies from the cookie jar. Stealing money from her father to buy the Beowolf stuffy Ruby wanted for her birthday, the look of pure happiness on her face was worth all the yelling she had to endure from her father because of it. Slowly, she became aware of a voice in her mind, asking her a question, each time, a memory showed the answer.

"Who are you?"

"You're my sunny little dragon," A young Taiyang said with a smile. "That's what your name means. Little dragon of sunshine. Its the same as my name, and my fathers and his before his. Your mother wanted to name you something else but I knew that you would be destined to make the world a brighter place. I know you have for me"

"Who are you?"

"I am Yang Xiao Long" A thirteen year old girl said as she placed her hand over her heart. "And I pledge myself to serve and protect the people of the world. No matter who, where or when, I will use my skills and abilities always for realm, kingdom and world and never for my own selfish reasons. I vow to uphold justice and the law and defend those values against the creatures of the darkness. I pledge myself to the code. I am a Huntress"

"Who are you?"

"Well, Blake, I'm Yang, Ruby's older sister! I like your bow!" Said Yang with a smile as she looked at the black haired woman, sitting in the corner of the room, reading by candle light.

"Who are you?"

"Get away from her!" Yang screamed as she flew through the air towards Adam Taurus as he pulled his blade out of Blake and just before he cut off her arm.

She felt her heart beginning to speed up, trying to pump blood to her vital organs only served to drain what she had left faster. Neo was in tears as she tried to help her, Emerald was looking up at Mercury as his foot hovered over her face. The voice asking her the same question over and over again, begging for an answer. "I am Yang Xiao long" She replied in a whisper. It asked her again. She replied with a weaker voice. Again and again, it asked who she was. Again and again, she
replied with the only answer she knew.

She took in a ragged breath, pain shot through the numbness as she clenched her teeth. In that moment of clarity, she felt fear. Fear of death. For years, she was okay with dying and not caring who it would affect, but now, with people wanting her, she was afraid to be alone. She wanted Ruby, she wanted Weiss, She wanted her father, her mother, Summer Rose, Jaune, Nora, Ren and Pyrrha. She wanted her friends.

Desperate, she clenched her teeth and reached out with a bloody hand towards Neo, a need to protect her. Pain flooded her mind, it was hard to think through it, hard to move through it. It became everything she could feel, the fire in her soul was fighting desperately to stay alive and hold her life together. A fresh wave of pain arched through her body and she swallowed up by the darkness. In the darkness, she saw a white light and it moved towards her until it became everything she could experience. She could not hear, she could not feel, everything was a blinding light. One final time, the voice asked her who she was, when she did not reply, her heart answered for her.

And Yang Xiao Long burned.

Chapter End Notes

Hello! Sorry it took so long, but here's the next one. the song is "Karma made me an arsonist" By Outline In Color. (They don't have a wiki or a section on AZ lyrics. makes me feel a little hipster)

So funny story, This story was supposed to be up about 6 hours ago, but most of it was lost when the tab decided to close for no real reason, causing me to lose about half of what I wrote before I could save it...hurrah...

Also, I've begun to post this story on FanFiction.net as well, I'll be uploading a chapter a day until FF is caught up, so if you prefer to read over there, now you can enjoy my terrible terrible world!

As such, I've been getting some feedback from over there saying that I should break up my paragraphs a bit better so I tried that on this chapter, if you can let me know if this is better or easier to read to earlier chapters, please please let me know. I strive for feedback to make me a better writer, and if I'm a better writer, I'll produce better stores that you can enjoy! Its like a circle.

With that said, if you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo (So close to 200, I can almost taste it!) If you notice anything wrong or off, please do not hesitate to put a bit of feedback or even just comment on what you like or don't like about the story, anything is welcome. And with that, thank you for taking time to read my slice of madness.
Weiss sat at her desk, resting on her elbows, head in her hands as she stared at the red folder that was sitting in front of her. She had spent the entire night going through its contents and was now digesting it fully. From the window, the sun was slowly beginning to rise, making her dark room, lit only by the lamp on her desk, brighter by the minute. She did not know how long she had sat there staring at the file after reading it. Two, maybe three hours. Just trying to figure out what exactly she had just read.

One hundred and fifty-two corpses were in a recoverable condition to be identified as attackers belonging to the Kingdom of Mistral. One hundred and fifty-two people were responsible for the deaths of one thousand six hundred and forty-seven civilians, sixty two law enforcement officers, forty-seven military personnel and four times as many wounded and injured in varying conditions. Making it the worst attack on the northernmost kingdom since the first Great war. The hospitals were filled to capacity for months following the attack, everyone doing everything they could to help and save as many as they could. Eventually, the report came out with the final tally of numbers, and it was much more than anyone had expected.

Of the one hundred and fifty-two Mistral combatants and the pieces, they recovered from suicide bombings, every single one of them was a faunus.

Weiss stared at the closed file on her desk, her mind piecing things together. If all the Mistral attackers were faunus, why did Atlas blame Mistral when they would have obviously blamed the White Fang if they read this file. All the evidence was there, pictures and descriptions were all presented in order and tagged correctly.

Unless they never saw this file. Unless someone switched this file with another, one that hid the fact that they were all faunus. But who could have that much power over public records?. Who would benefit from such blatant tampering with evidence? Weiss was running through all the possible people in her head when her scroll went off next to her, causing her to jump in her chair. Reaching over to the device, she looked at it and saw the alarm she had set for six thirty had gone off. Even if she was on leave, that did not mean that she should ignore her sleep schedule. Just as she was about to toss the device onto her bed, she held onto it and opened it again.

While the CCT was down, making communications across large areas impossible. While she was in Atlas, she could still access public files that were uploaded using both her military identification and her position in the SDC. After a few logins and more than enough time for pages to load,
Weiss found what she was looking for. She quickly read through the file that was uploaded and she was correct. The official file that was submitted to the council was vastly different to the one she had in her hands now. After she reviewed it, almost every one of the Mistral people had their faunus status removed in their files. Setting the scroll down, she looked back through the file and began to make notes on what was changed.

Among other things, the date of which the file was made was different. While the one she was given was dated a week before the official, as well as different doctors submitted each report. For the one with all the faunus was made by a man named Doctor Matthew Pinot, who was on the council previously. While the one who submitted the official report was named Doctor Arthur Watts, the new Chancellor that took office after Pinot. Things were not adding up for Weiss and she needed to get answers from someone. While it would not be impossible for her to get an audience with Chancellor Watts, she did not particularly like the man. Instead, she searched up Pinot's medical office and dialed the number.

Weiss was tapping her nails against her wooden desk as the ringing continued. After the fourth time, someone finally picked up.

"Good morning, Atlas Medical, how can I direct your call?" Asked a young man with forced politeness.

"Good morning. This is Weiss Schnee, I was hoping to talk to Doctor Pinot. Do you know when he's available?"

There was a long pause and Weiss wondered if she was disconnected when the man spoke up again.

"I'm sorry, Ms. Schnee" His voice was soft and sad. "But Doctor Pinot died during the attack a few years ago"

Weiss looked at the file before her and double checked the date it was made. It was a full week after the attack, how could he have died during it? "Would you like me to make an appointment with someone else, Ms. Schnee?"

"Ah. No. No that's alright, thank you" She quickly hung up and set her scroll on the table and looked at the files before her. Obviously, the doctor did not die during the attack if he made this report. Someone high up was covering this up, shifting the blame from White Fang to Mistral, and it was quite obvious who it was. She pulled up the public file once more and sent the documents to a printer that was set up in the spare bedroom. After several long minutes, she took the file and began to cross reference and take notes of what had been changed.

Pouring through dozens of pages, notes, and pictures. Weiss saw bodies covered in blood, chunks missing from their flesh, some headless bodies, and slabs of flesh that looked no different than meat that has been left on a grill for too long. Though they were horrific, Weiss had grown accustomed to the variety of different ways a person could die with her time, fighting in this war. Most of the worst carnage she had seen had been directly from her and her weapon. Dust does some interesting things to human flesh if you let it. She spent the rest of the morning making the changes, with a final sigh, she looked at the two files in front of her and tried to wrap her head around it.

Chancellor Watts took office after Pinot's death, that was obvious enough, while the reasons why was beyond her. Why Blame Mistral for the attack and not the White Fang, what could Watts possibly gain from this besides the war?
Watts wanted the war to happen. But why? What could he gain from a White Fang attack on the people of Atlas? He took office after having Pinot killed, blaming Mistral who was actually White Fang. Everything fell into place except for the reason why. Why did he do all this? She needed answers, and she was not going to get them here. She gathered her files and put them into a case. Taking just enough time to wash her face and put on some clean clothing; simple blue jeans and a casual white shirt. She grabbed a blue jacket as she left her apartment and waved down a cab. As much as she liked the man, she simply did not have time to wait for Heartwood to come pick her up.

Telling the driver to get her to the military base, she needed to go to the top about this, and no one was higher than General Ironwood. If he could put this information to good use, it would be him. With the folder safely sealed inside of a briefcase, she anxiously tapped her fingernails on her knee. The driver tried to make small talk with her but one icy glance his way made the words dry up in his mouth. While he was concentrating on the road in front of them, Weiss looked out the window and studied the buildings as they passed. So many people were just mindlessly wandering along, nowhere in particular. While she was looking out, she noticed that they had not moved forward in quite some time. Looking out the front window, she saw the problem.

The road in front of them was filled with vehicles, stopping any progression. "Why did you go this way?" She demanded.

"I'm sorry miss, I didn't know this was backed up. Must be an accident or something" He reasoned. With a roll of her eyes, she handed him a few lien cards, more than enough for the ride here and got out of the cab. She was close enough to the base that a brisk walk would get her there within half an hour. Enough time for her to sort out her thoughts and try to figure out a reason why anyone would wish war in a time of peace. He already had the position of chancellor, what more could he want out of the kingdom?

Her train of thought was ripped away from her when she heard someone scream out. Looking up, she saw a woman fighting with a man in a large coat with a hood over his head. He ripped the woman's purse out of her hands and ran down a nearby alleyway. Heedless if he was armed or not, the woman ran after him, screaming obscenities as she gave chase. Weiss quickly chased after the two of them, she could not just ignore injustice like that happening in front of her eyes. She rounded the corner and shouted after them, Telling him that she was part of Atlas military and for him to stop. She rounded the corner and skidded to a halt at the sight before her.

"Would you like me to make an appointment with someone else, Ms. Schnee?" Alkmene Gift asked the Heiress over the phone line.

"Ah. No. No that's alright, thank you" She said over the phone.

"Very well, Ms. Schnee. Have-" He was cut off by the dial tone as she abruptly hung up on him. "Bitch..." Placing the phone back onto the cradle, Alkmene got out of his seat and looked around the reception desk of the medical clinic. Standing out of his seat, he grabbed the dark suit jacket off his chair and began to slip it on as he walked down towards one of the connecting bridges that webbed across downtown Atlas, connecting the large buildings to each other.

Running a hand through his dark, well-trimmed hair, Alkmene made sure he looked presentable before talking to his employer. His dark suit was clear of wrinkles and made sure his red tie was
straightened. Looking into the reflection of a passing window, he looked into his green/yellow eyes and decided that he needed a shave tonight. Stopping in front of large wooden doors. He cleared his throat before knocking loudly, a voice beckoned him in after a few moments of silence and he passed through the doors into the office. It was well furnished and bright from the windows that spanned an entire wall overlooking the city.

"Chancellor Watts, sir?"

"Yes, what is it?" The man asked. His head was down and he was reading through some documents. A cup of coffee saw next to his work, still steaming with a spoon resting lightly on the saucer.

"We might have a problem, sir"

"Are you that incompetent that you cannot handle a small thing by yourself, Gift?" Watts asked with a more annoyed tone in his voice.

Gulping down, Alkmene cleared his throat and spoke quickly, as to not waste the Chancellor's time. "Its Ms. Schnee, sir. She was looking for Doctor Pinot"

At that, he slowly looked up from his work and blinked a few times. Leaning back, he took a long sip from his coffee and thought about it for a moment. "I thought we had that taken care of" He began slowly.

"Yes, sir. We got rid of everyone that was associated with him so no one should know he had an accident. All the records show he died during the attack. Though, like I said before, we were still missing the original draft of his autopsy reports on the attackers" Alkmene said quickly, his hands behind his back and standing straight for the man. He kept his eyes on the man before him as he sipped on his coffee some more.

"Yes, I remember you telling me this," He said as he narrowed his eyes. "Obviously, someone got a hold of it before and now she has it"

"It would appear so, sir"

Chancellor Watts was silent for a few moments before placing his drink down and steepled his fingers together. Leaning forward, he made his orders very clear. "It's a shame. I had hoped to use her but it seems like she needs to be taken care of"

With a nod, Alkmene turned to leave before the Chancellor stopped him again. "Do not disappoint, Gift" With a final nod, Alkmene left his office to start on his task. The rest of the morning was spent getting his team together and keeping tabs on their target. It was easy enough to find where she lived, they waited for her to leave before putting the plan into action. Tracking her movements, they ran into a bit of good luck when she hit a traffic jam and left the cab, giving them the chance to set up the trap. Once it was sprung, Alkmene and a partner walked down the alley and looked at the girl in question.

Altogether, it was a seven on one fight. Calmly, Alkmene pulled out a pair of leather gloves and stretched them over his hand as her blue eyes looked over everyone before her. "Remember. It needs to look like an accident" He said as weapons were drawn and got ready for a fight.

And Weiss Schnee was trapped.
I'm alive. Just barely.

So to start things off, I'm super duper sorry about how late this chapter was getting out. And I'm especially sorry for how short this chapter is. Compared to the ones before, this is really really short and I'm so sorry for that.

I've been battling a really bad cold for a while now, combine that with video games and general writer's block, this is seriously the best I can do and I'm so sorry for that. But I promise to make it up to everyone with the next couple of chapters. I promise it will be much better than this one.

Weiss has always been a bit harder for me to write for, same with Blake for some reason, not too sure. Maybe because they have their stuff more together than Ruby and Yang.

Anyways, again. I'm sorry for the shortness of this chapter and how long it took to get out, the next few will be better I swear.

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo or a comment, those are always loved. And thank you for taking the time out of your day to read my slice of Madness.
Yang was bleeding out. Neo watched her clutch at her side as blood flowed from her wound and spread across her clothing. She watched as her features grew pale and she fell to her knees. She tried to race to her side, only for the pain to shoot through her scalp as a harsh pull on her hair forced her onto her back. As she fought Mercury to get to her feet, a sharp kick to her stomach forced the air out of her lungs and she collapsed, fighting for air as the blonde beauty fell onto her stomach, staining the stone beneath her with her blood.

No!

Neo silently screamed as she wanted to come to her side, but Mercury had other plans. She heard Emerald tried to shoot at the man, but from her angle and his increased speed she could not find her target. His foot flew out and kicked the revolver out of her hand before he pressed his foot against the dark skinned woman's throat. Neo heard the sound of a round being clicked into the chamber of his greaves as he smiled. The black veins under his skin contorting with his smile. "It's a shame, Em. But this is where you die" He said as he brought his foot up to deliver the final blow.

Just before he could kill Emerald, a sudden explosion caused him to stumble and almost lost his balance. Looking back, everyone tried to find the source of what interrupted their execution. Pink and white eyes were blinded by a brilliant light. Heat radiated from where Yang was once laying on the ground. Slowly, the light began to fade away and Yang stood before them. Several pockets of flame littered the ground around her, her body was on fire as she took a deep breath and screamed to the heavens. A fresh wave of light and heat forced Neo to look away to save her eyes.

When she looked back, Yang was facing them now. The first thing she noticed was that her entire right side was consumed in flame. A raging inferno engulfed her stump and reached past her hip, her jacket and shirt were burning from the heat and flames slowly crept their way across her torso. Her hair had come undone from the pony tail Neo had helped her into every morning since they left Patch, now it was flowing out behind her, each lock swaying and twisting like the flame that threatened to envelop her wholly.

Gone was the pale, beautiful shade of lilac. Now her eyes burned a bloody crimson, her pupils constricting just tiny dots as rage consumed ever part of her body, mind, and soul. Her eyes locked onto Mercury and she gritted her red, bloody teeth tightly in anger. Neo could see her breath steam out from her mouth like it was in the middle of winter, signaling just how hot her body had become. She swung her arm behind her, the pillar of fire from her stump following the action, and she fired her weapon to fling herself towards her target. Flames shot out of her right side to stabilize her flight through the air.

With a battle cry of equal parts rage and anguish, she threw herself at Mercury who only had a few precious seconds before Yang brought her flame forth for a hard right hook. He brought his foot up
to block and the force from her attack threw him back several feet, he recovered in mid-air and landed on both feet before Yang continued her assault. Never letting up and always kept pushing him further back. Neo did not know where she got this burst of Aura from or how she was maintaining it, but for the moment, she was glad for it.

Pulling herself to her feet, her body cried out in anguish. She could feel the muscles in her stomach stretch out painfully as her limited Aura tried to repair the damage from Mercury's attack to her. Hunched over slightly and holding her stomach, she made her way to Emerald to see if the mint-haired woman was okay. Emerald was slowly sitting and rubbing her throat gently. A dark bruise forming on her chocolate skin as they both turned to watch Yang. "What the hell happened?" Emerald asked with a hoarse voice. Neo simply shook her head, she had no idea.

Yang was continuing her unrelenting assault against Mercury. Her fist and flame came in fast and heavy, he was doing everything he possible c avoid getting hit. When she threw a threw too much of her weight into a punch, Mercury saw his chance for a counter attack. Raising his leg up, he went to kick at her head when Yang raised the flames and Neo saw a flash of colour as his foot was stopped by the flames. It was then she looked at saw that the flames had a shape. Her Aura had taken the flames of her soul and molded them into a weapon for her, her flames gave her an arm to fight with.

It was in that moment she realized something about her. In the time she had gotten to know her better, Neo had learned about Yang's Semblance more. She said that whenever she got hit, her Semblance would trigger and she could dish it out twice as hard. She chalked that up to why her eyes went red sometimes. But Neo saw her eyes turn red during her fights with Emerald during their travels often. Sometimes the topic of Blake, the woman she was not, would come up and Yang would avoid it at all cost, even then, her eyes flared up.

Emotional pain. Mental pain. Physical pain. It was all eaten by her Semblance and transformed into raw power for her to use against her enemies. But how can you punch emotions? How can you inflict twice the amount of pain if what inflicted it to you was the act of being left behind? So with no outlet for her Semblance, Yang turned to grief and alcohol to try and burn off the pain and anger. Now, with no alcohol to numb her pain and her anger breaking the dam made by her depression, Yang was free to burn.

Yang pushed her arm of flame and Mercury was thrown off of her, a hard left jab was blocked as he switched to his other foot. Just like at the tournament four years ago, the two of them danced and moved against each other. Dust rounds bounced off her body and flew past their heads in an attempt to kill each other. Flames continued to pour off her body with each throw of her arm, a blow connecting to Mercury's bicep and caused him to cry out in pain as he skidded across the ground and got back up quickly, tossing the black leather jacket to the ground, he tensed his body to go at her again.

Doing the same, Yang reached up and tossed the singed jacket off her shoulder and threw herself at him once more. Blocking a kick with her own leg, she connected a strike against his jaw with her left fist and his body bounced off the ground high enough for Yang to reach back with her flame arm and drove the force into his chest, bashing him back onto the ground. A web of cracks came out of the dent where his body met stone. Before she could attack again, his legs came out and he tripped her buying him enough time for him to catch his breath.

Wiping a trail of black blood off his lip with the back of his hand, he took ragged breaths as he tried to focus. He looked at his hand and he looked like he was concentrating on something. It was Emerald that made the connection and spoke quickly, her voice quiet from her wound.

"Something's not right. His Aura isn't activating" She was right, Neo watched as Yang jumped at
him again, her fist getting blocked by his arm, but she did not see the tell tale shimmer of an Aura deflecting the hit, whatever Salem had gifted him, it stripped him of his Aura. A price paid for the speed and strength he gained.

The fight continued as Yang, stepping up her offense as she fought like before she lost her arm. While Neo would have thought it would have been a difficult time to adjust to such a limb, but not only had Yang gotten used to it instantly, she had mastered it fully. She went for a punch, he went to block with his arm, only for the arm to phase through his, burning the skin and materializing just in time for it to connect to his chin. Crying out in pain, he clutched his arm. Painful blisters forming from where the flames licked his skin, which was quickly becoming pale like ash.

He gritted his teeth, his eyes wide in anger as he cried out in pain. The black veins across his exposed skin began to grow, the ones on his face reached his eyes and began to darken his eyes and tint his irises. "Why can't I kill you!" He screamed out as he launched himself into another attack. His kicks came in faster than before, Yang was having problems compensating for the sudden burst of speed. Catching her off guard, he knocked her arm away and kicked hard into her stomach, knocking the wind out of her body as he got ready for another attack.

His foot came up and caught her chin, causing her body to follow the momentum of the attack. As his foot came down from the arc, his greaves fired and his heel cracked into the other side of her face, causing her to whip back the other way. The momentum carried him as he jumped and spun in place, another shot from his weapon and his heel bashed her head once again, this time forcing her to meet the stone under them with her face. Before he could stomp on her, she quickly rushed to her feet, tackling him to the ground and mounting him with her fists raised high.

She only managed to connect two punches to his face before he threw her off of him with some unknown strength. He quickly got to his feet and rushed at her, but she was ready for him. Quickly ducking under one of his kicks, she crouched down and swept his feet from under him. Quickly coming up, she stared down at him and punched him onto the ground hard. He got up quickly and he returned in kind, knocking her to her knees with a hit to the back of her knees.

Looking up at him, he brought the side of his foot down and kicked her face, her Aura flashing as blood spilled from her mouth. Before Neo could react, Yang jumped at him and connected her fist to his stomach once more, but before he could do anything, the sound of her weapon's firearm went off. His body jerked as the back of his body was ripped open from the inside. From her position, Neo was looking at Yang's back, she could see the shock in Mercury's black and red eyes as black blood began to pool out of his wounds.

Reaching back, Yang gave him another kidney shot and another shell ripped through his blackened insides, then another and another. Satisfied, she pushed him off of her and stared down at him. He was clutching his stomach like she was, but he still got to his feet, albeit much slower than anything before. Something strange began to happen to the body that Salem had transformed with her gift. Black wisps of smoke began to rise from his body and float to the air. Neo had seen that before, It reminded her of a dying Grimm.

Gritting his bloody black teeth, he took a deep breath and tensed up suddenly. Gathering his strength, he tried for a high kick, going straight for her face again, but this time she was ready for him. She brought her flaming arm to bare, meeting force for force. His foot met her fist and her flames grew more intense in a flash, and metal made way for the flame. Steel flowed and bent like a flower bloom as his leg was shattered from the force of her punch, breaking his weapon and limb in the same motion.

Falling to the ground, he clutched his broken prosthetic leg and cried out through gritted teeth as
Yang stood over him. Her body radiant, outshining the sun that hung above them, her right arm a swirling pool of fire as she stood tall before him. This was the man who broke her spirit before, through his and Emerald’s actions, she was disqualified and partially to blame for the attack on Beacon. Now he laid at her feet, broken and defeated like on the white stone slabs on the tournament grounds. Only this time, it was her and her strength along that put him there.

Using his one good leg, he tried to push himself away from her, he only got a foot away before her left hand came out and gripped the front of his shirt and lifted him up to her level. Gripping her arm to steady himself, burning crimson met blood red and black as Mercury stared at her. “What the fuck are you?” He asked her. For a brief moment, the anger and hate slipped from her face as she tried to think about her answer, only for it to come back ten fold. She screamed at him, making her message clear.

"I AM YANG XIAO LONG! AND YOU WILL WATCH. ME. BURN! "

She pulled back her flaming fist and pushed it right into his face, only instead of punching him, the flames went into him. His mouth and eyes wide as her flames were forced past his lips and down into his throat. Scratching at her body to stop this, her body glowed brighter and brighter as smoke and flames began to erupt from his body. His fighting stopped seconds later as his flesh began to burn and flake away like paper in a fire. Releasing him, he fell to his knees as skin and muscles were incinerated from the inside out, the only thing left was a blackened, charred skeleton.

But that too turned to dust, and Mercury was no more.

There she stood, in the ashes of her enemy at her feet, a force of nature barely contained in human form. The flames roaring down her body as she took a deep breath and cried out to the sky above. The flames around her body growing in height and intensity. Finally, they began to die off slowly. Her breaths came in long and deep and Neo gently approached her, moving slowly as not to startle her. When she came into view, Yang’s red eyes found her and Neo tensed up. After witnessing what she had done to Mercury, she really did not want to be on the receiving end of her wraith.

Now that she was closer, she could see Yang better. The wound she had gotten from Mercury been cauterized by her flames, her shirt was still torn, bloody and now sang from it. A bare breast exposed from the damage her new arm had caused but she did not seem to care. From the exposed part of her shirt, she saw the fresh scar tissue shiny and pink from her Aura and heat. She could make out the pattern in the arm of fire she had, the form looked like an arm, but it was always shifting, never staying in the same form for more than a few seconds.

With a tentative hand, she reached out and gently brushed against her hip. Her body was hot, almost too hot to even be this close to her, let alone feel her, but Neo endured as she stepped closer and brought her other hand around and began to hold the towering woman. She had almost lost her like she lost Roman before, unable to do anything to protect the ones she cared for. Pulling herself closer, she pressed her body against Yang, her head fitting just under her bust, and gave her a squeeze to try and anchor her. Her cheek gently nuzzling against her hot flesh, trying to calm her. Slowly, she saw that the fires around them began to die down, lowering in height and intensity until blazing flames became embers. Embers became sparks. Sparks became nothing. She felt the heat from Yang’s skin cool in degrees until she was at her normal body temperature, still several degrees higher than normal, but it was normal for her at least. The flames of her right arm faded away as well, growing smaller until they were gone entirely, leaving her bare, scarred stump as open to the world. She felt the blonde woman move, Neo was about to move when an arm wrapped around her upper back and pulled her into Yang.

Yang pulled her as close as she could into her own body and Neo sank into the touch. No words
were spoken between the two of them, none were needed. They were just both happy to be there for each other. Eventually, she pulled away and she looked up at the woman. The deep crimson of her eyes returned to their breathtaking violet and her hair had settled against her back, no longer aflame with her power. Neo smiled at her, blinking quickly to keep the tears from her eyes as she reached as high as she could on the tips of her toes to give her a light kiss on her lips. Yang returned the gesture in kind, but the moment was ruined when someone cleared their throat.

Looking over, Neo saw an older man wearing a layered red robe of some sort and looked at the three of them. At some point, Emerald had joined them, probably when they were kissing. "I take it, you were the one who dealt with that man?" He asked hesitantly. Yang simply nodded, her eyes darting around to where people were beginning to come out of their homes to see what had happened. "Thank you. He had threatened us to stay in our homes, or else he would have killed us if he saw anyone"

"He probably would have killed you if he had lived afterwards, or if we never came in the first place" Emerald said as she continued to rub her throat lightly. The man nodded gently as he cleared his throat again and began to untie a portion of his robe. Handing a deep red cape to her, Neo saw that some people were avoiding her sight, while others openly gawked at them. Realising what he was trying to do, Neo accepted the small cape and draped it over Yang's right shoulder, covering her exposed breast and tying it under her left arm.

With her covered up, the man turned back at them once more. "I don't suppose you are related to Taiyang Xiao Long, are you?" He asked lightly.

"Yes. He's my father. Why?" Yang asked as she took a step towards the man.

He was quiet for a few moments. All around him, Neo noticed people looked away or down at the ground, sorrow and shame in their eyes. "There is something you should see..." He said simply as he gestured them to follow him. Neo met Yang's eyes and they began to follow him in silence. Eventually, they were lead to the other side of the town, near the exit they would have gone through if they had decided just to rush past it. In front of them stood a tall, oval black rock. Around it was a series of flowers and scraps of paper with writings on them. On the face of it, carved and painted with yellow letters read a name;

"Taiyang Xiao Long.

A noble man stood"

Looking away from the grave marker, she looked up at Yang, but she only slipped away from the smaller woman and stood before the six foot stone. Slowly, she sunk to her knees and stared at it, tears streaming down her face as she reached out and ran her hand down the name of her dead father. Neo was about to go to her when a dark skinned hand was placed on her shoulder. Looking up, she saw Emerald shook her head slightly. "I think she wants to be alone...She'll be okay, we won't be far" Neo looked back at Yang and sighed, and left with Emerald so Yang could have her peace.
Woo, another one down!

And now Neo has a chapter! Hurrah!

So not much to say for this one, if you notice anything off, please let me know!

While I love the fact that Yang has a metal arm to punch people in the face with, one day I was exploring the wonderful world of Tumblr and saw a picture of Yang with a fire arm, and I was like. "That needs to be 100% in my story..." So there you go! Aura flame arm powers are a go!

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo! (I just got onto the top 100 by Kudos! Thank you to everyone who made that happen!) If you've already left a Kudo, please feel free to leave a comment! Comments are love, comments are life. (Please ignore me, its 2 Am and I really need sleep...) And as always, thank you for taking the time to read my little slice of madness!

Until the next chapter!
The soft crunch of snow echoes through her mind as Ruby walks down the path between the snow covered trees at night. She walked down this path before, she knew it like the back of her hand. But it changed, it was not the same. No, this was different. She has had this dream before, it was a nightmare. A dream that was red like roses. Before her, the path she took had a thick bar of red spanning the path. She continued to walk down the red path, knowing that her destination lead to the same place it always did.

Her cape flowed behind her, her red petals cascading and fluttering out like always. She watched as squirrel dart out from the trees to cross the red path. It took one step onto the crimson colour and it froze unnaturally, still bounding for its destination. Instantly, the woodland creature became red and dissolved into petals. This was not a place of life, this was a place frozen in time. Ruby pulled the hood over her head more, covering her face against the wind, but the cold never coming with it.

The path came to an end, behind her was a dead forest as far as the eye could see. In front of her, a cliff that span infinity to either side of her. Before her was a stone baring the mark of a rose. The epitaph of her mother "Thus kindly I scatter" chiselled into the gravestone. She walked up to it and knelt before it, a silent prayer to a person she remembered, Summer Rose, before the other one appears like she always does in the red dream. The wind blew off her hood in a sudden gust, Ruby looked up and she saw Summer Rose, smiling at her sadly, like she always does.

"Ruby" She spoke softly. "Please, you must stop this. You can't keep doing this to yourself"

"I don't know how..." Ruby said softly as she bowed her head in shame. "This has become my world now...War. Death. I do what I must to protect who I can. Is that not how a Huntress is supposed to live her life?"

"A Huntress is suppose to live with honour! Duty and compassion! To defend the weak and protect the realm! Ruby, what you have become, it's not a Huntress."

"But a soldier" She heard Ruby's, her voice call out behind her. Standing up, she slowly turned around and looked at the person who had spoke out. Before her stood the Red Death. She looked just like Ruby, the same height and form. While she looked the same, she was also different. Her skin was much paler than her own, her cape was much darker and it looked like it was soaked, weighed down as dark red petals dripped and pooled around her feet.
Her hair was also just as different as it was the same. It looked like someone had dumped a bucket of red liquid over her head, the crimson dripped from the tips of her hair, staining the white shirt red and trails of red water flowed down her pale skin. The Red Death looked up at Ruby, her eyes were black, with silver irises, making her eyes dark and threatening. Red tears dripped down the right side of her face and stained her cheeks as she took a step closer to Ruby. "You are not a Huntress" She said lightly, her voice deeper than her own, more threatening and commanding. "You are a soldier"

Ruby found it hard to breath, the Red Death leaving a dripping trail of petals in her wake as she walked towards her. "You had the enemy in your grasp, and you let her slip away" She said as she narrowed her dark eyes at her. "Why?"

"It was Weiss. I couldn't hurt Weiss..."

"She was the enemy!" The Red Death screamed at her, making Ruby flinch and cover her ears at the volume. "You show no weakness! No feelings on the battlefield! Or you will be killed! Then who will protect the young, the weak and the old? Nora? She's a mute that won't do anything. Ren can't use his legs and the other soldiers are useless. You are the only one who can defeat the enemy, Ruby!"

"Weiss is not the enemy!" Ruby snapped and shouted back at the Red Death. "She is my friend! They all are!"

"Really?" The Red Death hummed gently as she raised her eyebrow lightly.

Suddenly, a white light came from the side and she watched as Weiss charged at Ruby with Myrtenaster, her rapier, in hand. Ruby went to defend herself, but her own weapon was missing from its holster on her lower back. He looked back and braced for impact when the white haired woman suddenly froze, her entire being had become a red statue. Her weapon just inches away from her chest. "Weiss is from Atlas. Atlas is the enemy" The Red Death said as she walked past the frozen figure.

Next, Blake showed up and swung her weapon and Ruby. She too was frozen into a red statue, her features were one of anger and aggression. The ribbon of Gambol Shroud frozen in its waving from behind her as the blade stopped just before her head. "Blake ran from everyone, abandoned her duty. She is the enemy" Finally, Yang appeared to next to Blake. She was dressed in their father's old jacket with her hair done up in a pony tail. They locked eyes for a second before she looked down and turned away, only to be a crimson statue like the others.

"And Yang is useless. Only the strong survive in this world and she was not" The Red Death walked up and stood behind the row of statues that were her friends and her sister. "They betrayed you, abandoned you, refused to help you. They are the enemy" Ruby looked at each of her friends, the three closest people in her life and tried to think of them as anything else, other than her enemy. She reached up and covered her ears, trying to block out her words.

"You're wrong!" She cried out. "They're not the enemy!"

A cold, clammy hand touched her face. Forcing her to look up and into the black eyes of the Red Death. She stared at them and saw nothing. Her eyes were a void of emotion and logic. Only one thought drove her, the idea of death. "You must be stronger, Ruby" She began, crimson dripping from inside her mouth and down her chin. "Or else all the world will be your enemy. And when that happens, there is only one thing we can do" She said as she released her face and took a step away from her.
The Red Death answered the unasked question by reaching out behind her and pulling out her sniper scythe, Crescent Rose, and in a single motion, it opened up into the extended scythe form and spun quickly. Cleaving through the red statues that were her friends and they each exploded into a storm of red petals. Red was all she could see now, it coated the ground and blocked out the shattered moon. She looked up at the Red Death and she smiled a grim, red grin.

"We will paint the world, red like roses" She brought the blade of the scythe to bare and swung at Ruby. She saw the reflection of her own, fear stricken face looking back at her as the steel bit into her collar-

Ruby's eyes shot open as she gasped for air. The person next that was kneeling next to her swore out loud as he jumped to his feet. When her head finally cleared, she realised where she was. She was laying down on one of the pews of the church they took cover in, her cloak wrapped around her like a blanket. The person who was kneeling by her was finally identified as Concador the marksmen. Looking around, she saw the rest of D-squad and cease what they were doing before and looked over at her.

They were illuminated by the glow of the shattered moon coming in through the stained glass windows, painting everyone in random colours. A few open ration packs were scattered around while weapons were never out of arm's reach. The sun was gone, meaning she had been out for a number of hours at least. Swinging her legs off the seat, she cleared her throat lightly and felt her mouth was dry and gross, just as she was about to ask for something to drink, Midori had held his canteen out to her.

Taking a few gulps, she handed it back to him with a nod in gratitude as she looked around. "You alright, Rose? Gave us a bit of a scare there..." He said as he leaned against a pillar nearby while everyone else eyed her up. She noticed how mixed their expressions were. Some were mad, others were filled with sorrow or compassion. Even Concador's normally emotionless face was poking through, of what she was not sure.

"Yeah, I'm fine," Ruby said finally as he took a deep breath and stood up slowly. "What happened?"

"You killed that big ass thing and then fell all of a sudden..." Midori said as he pointed up to the ceiling.

"Never saw Midori haul ass like that before," Auburn said as he ran a hand through his dark hair with the blond stripe through it.

"Well, if I hadn't, Rose's brain's would be splattered all over the ground...."

Ruby ignored the banter as she looked up at the dark ceiling of the church. Sure enough, Crescent Rose was still stuck into the stone by its spear tipped shaft. Her attention was brought back to Midori when he asked if she knew what caused her sudden black out. Ruby just shrugged and kept it to herself. She figured it had something to do with the fact that she took two doses of Stimulant at the same time instead of staggering them, but they did not need to know that.

"I think it might have something to do with this..." Violet said as she lifted up a small glass vial. Ruby knew exactly what it was. Quickly reaching behind her, she slipped her fingers inside of her pouch where she usually kept the Aura Stim and felt around, completely empty. They had taken her drug, the syringes and the medical tube she used to tie her arm off as well as all her concentrated boosters. She jumped to her feet and stared at the medically trained personnel and held her hand out.
"Give it back" She demanded.

"What is this stuff, Rose?" She asked as she pulled it back away from Ruby.

"It's mine!" She screamed back at her. Her voice echoed through the old building and as she took deep breaths. "Give. It. Back" She said through gritted teeth. No one moved, no one spoke. Everyone just watched Ruby as she vibrated in her anger. They violated her trust, they stole her drug and now keeping it away from her. Midori just folded his arms over his chest and looked at her, she could feel him judging her with his pale blue eyes. "NOW!"

"Answer my questions and you'll get it back," Midori said as he reached over and gently took the glass vial from Violet. Ruby stayed silent as she fumed over this. Being interrogated by her own squad, if she had her weapon, she would not have to deal with his bullshit. But with her Aura drained as much as it was and weaponless, she was at their mercy. Taking her silence as her answer, Midori began the questions. "So, what exactly is this stuff?" He asked as he held it up to a stream of moonlight and shook the contents lightly.

"Aura Stimulant" She replied quickly. The look on his face told her that he was not going to be satisfied with simple answers. "It's something that works inside the body that reinvigorates the Aura, bringing it back to full strength over a period of time. Don't know how or why, I just know it keeps my Aura at a stable level day to day, otherwise it's pretty depleted. The small blister packs are more concentrated doses, the spike is higher but the drop is more extreme, probably why I blacked out..."

"How long you been using it?"

"Two years?" She was not sure exactly, time tended to blend together for her.

"Where did you get it?"

"Found it"

"No you didn't" Violet spoke up. She hand her fingers laced together, resting behind her head. Her legs her straight out and crossed over each other as she leaned against a wall. "That's Atlas Medical supplies, you don't just 'find it'

Ruby glared at the woman with freckles and grit her teeth. "I stole it from a supply transport we raided in Vale. Food, water, ammo was passed around, I kept the Stimulant for myself. I learned about it after a fight with an Atleasian specialist. He almost killed me because of it, I was lucky in that fight, but I needed something to help me turn the tides. So I began to use it. Everything became easier after that. I didn't need to sleep as much so I could keep watch more often. I didn't need to eat as much so I could give out pieces of my rations out or make them last longer."

Violet shook her head. "You thinks that's good? I've checked you over while you were out, let me tell you, you're not healthy." She asked as she lifted up her hand and began to count her fingers. "You've got sleep deprivation, malnourishment, dehydration, not to mention a wicked infection from your injection site if you keep picking at your scabs. And that's not even touching on your mental wellness" She finished off as she looked at her with deep caramel eyes.

"I'm fine," She said as she glared at the woman. She scoffed and shook her head as she folded her arms.

"You were screaming in your sleep, Rose" Ruby looked over at Midori as he spoke. "Screaming and crying. That's not normal" Ruby glared at him as she felt her nails digging into the palm of her
hand. She remained silent as her squad looked at her, waiting for a response. After a few tense moments, Midori sighed heavily and tossed the vial back to Ruby, who caught it with ease. He ignored the protests as he closed the gap and handed the syringes and medical tube back to her.

"You all got a problem with that? Need I remind you that if Sergeant Rose wasn't using the Stimulant, we'd all look like Pewt right now..." All eyes went over to side where a body laid in two pieces. Dark, torn curtains hid the two halves of his body, soaked in blood, turning a dusty blue to a shiny purple. She looked away from the corpse and began to methodically place her drug and tools back inside the pouch they were taken from. When everything was back in place, Midori asked what was the next plan of action.

After everyone packed up and Pixie helped her to get Crescent Rose back by boosting her up with her strength and Ruby using her Semblance to fly higher. She landed with ease and folded her weapon back into the rifle form before showing them the steel trap door Ruby had found earlier. After some effort, the trap door opened to reveal a cold, dark tunnel that leads deeper into the church. They all put flashlights onto their weapons and entered the darkness.

Without a flashlight attachment for her weapon, Ruby was forced to the third position of the Squad as they slowly and carefully walked down the tunnel. She noticed a branches from their path that ended with rotten food or a dead body. People were hiding out down here once, perhaps during the bombings, but died one way or another. They came to another cross roads, but saw that one of the paths had a lit torch on a wall. Silently, the whole Squad stacked up and began to slowly make their way in that direction.

They came up to another entrance when Ruby noticed something odd about the walls, they were covered in bullet holes. She examined one of them and lightly touched the impact area with her fingers. Probably 20mm rounds, if she measured correctly. What's more was that they were everywhere, the walls were littered with the holes, meaning there was a very large firefight with several soldiers using very large caliber weapons. Or one person shooting a lot.

She looked down and saw Auburn was about to turn down a hallway when she heard something a low hum echoing off the walls.

"Enemy"

The Red Death barely finished speaking when Ruby flew past her squad and pushed Auburn out of the way as the corridor he was about to go down was fulled with bullets that would have torn him to shreds. Holding him onto the ground, she waited for the firing to stop before shouting at her team to keep down and against the wall. She flew down the corridor, petals flowing off her body as she sped towards the person who was using their weapon.

She leaped over another burst of automatic fire and closed the gap between the two of them. The flash from the weapon blocked her vision, but she knew where she needed to go. Zig-zagging her way towards her target, she slid under one final volley and brought her weapon up, the scythe unfolding and coming up to the person's neck. She was about to pull the trigger, making the sharp edge slice through their skin when she heard her mother's voice in her head, screaming at her to stop. The one moment of hesitation was all she needed to see who she was about to kill.

"Ruby?" the person, a woman, said as Ruby saw her reflection in designer sunglasses.

"Coco..."

Coco Adel stood in front of her. The spinning barrels of her weapon slowing to a stop as she pulled back finally, Ruby doing the same. She was wearing what she usual wore, the light brown sweater
and the darker waist cincher showing off a bit of her midriff. Instead of the furry neck and scarf, she wore a deep v-neck with her series of beaded necklaces dangling from her neck. Something with insulation would have made anyone get heat exhaustion very easily.

The next thing she noticed that had changed from the last time she saw Coco was her face. She could see deep scars coming from under the left half of her sunglasses and another long one pulling at the left part of her mouth, forcing her to have a cold, grim smirk at all times. Next thing she saw was her hair. The signature beret still sat on top her head, but the caramel lock of hair that was usually free was weighted down by two coloured beads. One a deep maroon and the other a faded green.

Ruby took her weapon away from the woman's neck and looked her over once more, she felt Coco do the same. Her left arm had armour on it that was not there before. A large, red gauntlet and a green shoulder pauldron. Each had scars from bullets and claw scratched that damaged the paint and metal. Everything else was about the same as before. "Looking good, Ruby" Coco said with a grim smirk as she reached up and took her glasses off to talk to the younger woman.

Ruby was taken back slightly by what she saw, her left eye was damaged badly. Gone was the rich chocolate of her eyes, now her left was a milky, clouded mess of damage. Her right eye was almost cross-eyed trying to make up for the loss of vision in her other eye. Ruby was at a lost of words as Coco looked at her in the eye and nodded. "You the cavalry?" Ruby nodded lightly and Coco sighed in relief. "Good, cause we were going to run out of supplies pretty fast" She said as she replaced the glasses and walked behind a few boxes that were set up as a makeshift barricade.

Ruby signaled her team that it was all clear and they came running in. They all followed Coco down another path where four soldiers jumped and aimed at them before lowering their weapons in relief. They wore the red and black of the Reclamation army, around them, six others were laying on the ground, groaning and holding onto their bodies, trying to make the pain go away. Violet quickly opened her pack and began to help them out.

As Coco began to give orders to start packing up, Ruby saw someone she had not seen since the start of the war. Making her way past the bodies, she crouched down next to Sun Wukong and looked at him. His usual white shirt was replaced with the military fatigues with the purple and tan camouflage pattern of Vacuo. He had a large, blood-stained bandage wrapped around his stomach and his tail was in his lap. She noticed that it was only half of its length, the tip scarred over and short.

"Sun..." She shook the monkey faunus's shoulder lightly and he looked up at her. His blond hair an even bigger mess that it usually was. His skin was pale and moist from blood lose. Blue eyes looked at her and widen with surprise.

"Ruby?"

"Come on," She said as she grabbed his arm gently. "Let's get you out of here."

Chapter End Notes

Look! People are alive! Hurrah!

Also, I have no fashion sense at all. Or any ability to describe clothing, I'm a writer! Not a fashion designer damnit!
I'm also exploring the world of mental health issues. Again, no idea what I'm doing, just kinda going with the flow and write what sounds right, correct me if I'm wrong.

Oh, and I don't want to flood the tags with anymore (Cause its kinda a lot so far) So I don't know if I should include a Emerald/Jaune relationship tag. It's not the main focus but it is there, so let me know what you think!

So with that, another chapter comes to a close and please tell me if anything doesn't make sense cause I always miss them. Spelling, grammar, general asshattery, anything.

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo, if you already have, leave a comment, I love seeing my emails go off with comments and I smile at every one of them, and as always, thank you for taking the time out of your day to read my slice of madness.
Blake quickly aimed Gambol Shroud at the Ràn-Beowolf and fired a shot into its wide open maw as it screamed at her. The Dust round tore through the soft meat inside its mouth and exited through the top of its head. The creature was launched back and was already dissolving before it hit the deck. Changing her aim, she shot at two others that were currently climbing over the railing to get at the crew members of the *Shaded Galley*. They were forced back into the endless deep as the general alarm continued to blare out over the ocean.

They needed to get out of here now. If the Grimm do not kill them all, the maelstrom of exploding Dust certainly will. It was slowly expanding and the chunks of ice and earth were getting larger, shooting out in random directions at high speeds, strong and heavy enough to do serious damage if they should get him. Looking back, she saw the Captain rushing back to the command centre to steer them away from the storm, she just needed to make sure the Grimm did not get him.

The rest of the crew were firing at all sides, making sure none of the Grimm got close to them. Bodies dropped back into the ocean as screams echoed out as some got too close and grabbed a person before sinking back into the water, to be drowned before death. They were swarming the ship, there were simply too many for them to hold at bay. Spent shell casings flooded the deck as Blake slowly backed up, creating a larger cushion between her and death while taking away the little remaining room she had to run.

Blake could not run from this problem, she was stuck in the middle of the ocean now, there was nowhere to run, she she had to fight.

She pulled the trigger and the slide of her weapon slide back and locked in place. Out of ammo.

Cursing her luck, she growled and the blade opened up and she began to cut up any and all who came close to her with her blades in her hands. Cleave and slice, the acrid stench of dead Grimm filled her nose as she used her made clones of herself to dodge out of more dire situations. From the corner of her eye, she spied the maelstrom light up suddenly and a large explosion rocked the ship, sending everyone to the deck as great stones began to fall from the skies.

Like a blast from a shotgun, the stones fell all around them. Most of them falling into the water around the ship, but some bashed against its hull, shaking it and rolling it almost onto its side. Some fell onto the deck, coating the floor with ice, flames and mud. Some were more unfortunate and had elemental stones fall on top of them. Screams only echoed for a moment before they were cut off with the sounds of bones snapping and flesh being flattened.

Blake heard the First Mate shout orders at everyone. They were to regroup at the stairwells and stop them from going inside the ship. Blake quickly sliced the jaw off of the Ràn-Beowolf she was fighting and brought the cleaver-sheath down on its shoulder, opening its chest before kicking placing a foot on its chest and prying her weapon out of its body. Turning she sped towards where everyone was going to defend but not before slicing the neck of another Grimm and helping
someone off the ground.

She got into the stairwell but the man behind her was not fast enough. Turning around when he cried out in pain, she saw that he was holding onto the door frame with both his hands, his rifle laid forgotten at his feet. Around her chest, a large, black hand with long white claws was pulling him back towards the horde of monsters behind him. He was crying out for help, tears and snot fell from his face as his body trembled with strain. Blake reached out and grabbed his hand, she felt two sets of hands on her body to help her save this man's life.

Pulling as hard as she could, he cried out in pain as two opposing forces fought for his life before another large black hand came out from behind him and wrapped around his head. His cries of pain were quickly silenced as his neck was twisted with such force and speed that it tore flesh apart and popped bones out of sockets. His body went limp and Blake released the dead man's hand, letting the body be thrown back outside to be feasted upon by beings of nightmare and darkness.

She dropped to the ground as a chorus of gunfire echoed through the small hallway and kept the Rän-Beowolves at bay as someone tried to help her to get feet. Rushing past the firing squad, she ran down through the decks below until she got to the bridge, where Captain Bronze was wrestling with the wheel, trying his best to steer them away from danger. Crewmen and women were shouting details to him as he barked orders back. She could see out over the ocean and saw that it was alive with beasts.

"Ms Black!" The captain shouted. "We need to keep them away from the engines! They're our only chance of escaping with any shred of our lives!" With a nod, Blake rushed back down through the corridors and quickly reloaded her clips and grabbed an extra rifle before rushing towards the engine room. When she got there, she saw several people were throwing Dust into the compartments, trying to up the speed so they could leave faster. If they left the area, the horde would stop following them hopefully, then they could take care of all those remained.

Seeing as they were safe for the time being, she was about to take up a position to cover the hallways when the whole ship shook screams of terror echoed through the halls. She could smell blood coming from one of the other stairwells and she rushed to help out anyway she could. When she got to the deck, she saw what had shaken the ship and it terrorised her. Standing before her was the largest Beowolf she had ever seen.

It stood three feet higher than all the others around it. The Alpha had larger fins on its arms and legs and a sharp razor dorsal fin that ran from the crest of its dead down all the way to its tail. Even if they could escape the feeding grounds of the swarm, if this Alpha was around, it was draw more to them in no time. She charged towards the creature, leaping over its underlings before coming down with her cleaver for an opening hit.

It's bone armour was much harder than the others, making only a small gouge in its defences as it blocked her attack. It growled as it swiped with a counter slash where she simply ducked under it and jumped into the air and fired at its back as she landed, causing it to turn and shield it's face to protect its vulnerable eyes. With all the commotion that she was causing with her fight, other Rän-Beowolves turned and began to rush her down on the deck of the ship.

It took all of her training to simply survive, let alone attack back. She countered and parried claws and sliced off limbs with each attack and blocked the massive claws of the Alpha whenever it tried to attack her. She was quickly getting surrounded, so she gripped the black ribbon of her weapon and began to swing it around her, creating some space to breath. As she wielded her weapon, Grimm limbs were lopped off with reckless abandon. Beasts falling to the ground as legs were swept up from under them and tripped over chunks of Earth and slipped on ice.
Pulling on the ribbon, she sent a round into the head of one Grimm and her weapon came back to her in a flash. It flew past her head, just shaving a few strands of hair off of her as it sunk into the neck of a Grimm behind her. Quickly turning, she wrapped the ribbon a few times around it's injured neck and began to strain all her muscles as she began to swing the beast around as a living flail. Knocking back several Grimm before she released it back at the Alpha, knocking it to the ground.

Her muscles ached as she looked around quickly in her newly made breathing room. Catching her breath, she saw that they had moved away from the storm and wreckage of the White Fang ship, but the Grimm were still coming. The deck was filled with bodies of people and Grimm, coating the wood in black icor and deep crimson. The Alpha began to get back onto its feel and let out a feral roar as it charged at her. Using her semblance, she managed to dodge a number of its strikes against her before she caught a swing of its tail to her stomach and was thrown back against the bridge window.

A web of cracks did nothing to cushion her toss as she fell to the ground and tried to breath. The Alpha was about to drive its claws into her when a loud bang echoed through the air and it was forced back a few feet. Next to her, the first mate pumped a shotgun and fired again at the Grimm. "Get up!" She shouted at her as she gritted her teeth. Her arm had four large chunks of missing skin and flesh and was covered in blood. "I've got a plan! Get it to the bow of the ship and we can finish it off!"

With a nod, Blake got up and raced towards the beast and caught it in a drop kick, sending it towards their destination. She ran past it as the first mate ran back inside to the bridge and began to issue console commands to get whatever she needed to defeat this thing ready. Standing at the bow of the ship, Blake waited for the Alpha to get closer before she continue her attack. Dodging and setting up clones to take her hits before dragging the blade across the back of the knee, dropping it lower to the ground.

Behind the beast, the floor opened up and a large cannon was raised from inside the ship. From the bow, she could see the First Mate grinning madly as it took aim and launched a high powered shot at the Alpha, only for it to dodge out of the way. That heavy cannon was going to be the best chance they have for dealing with this thing. She heard the gears turning under the floor, the reload was starting and she needed to buy time before it killed her or tore the cannon off its stand.

Rushing to meet the Alpha head on, she began to slice and cleave as they danced around each other. Blocking and countering the best she could with its thick armour and its brute strength, it knocked her back when she put up a clone too late and sent her sliding across the deck and bashing up against the railing. Her already broken ribs cried out in anguish as she tried to catch her breath, sharp broken bones digging into her lungs as she tried to stand onto her feet.

Looking up, she saw the Alpha walking towards her. She pushed herself to her feet and held her chest lightly, trying to fight through the pain. She needed to get this thing to stand still long enough for the first mate to fire the cannon at it, but she felt her Aura was weak, she could not keep making clones as much as she had before, and the longer the fight went on, the worse her body was going to get. Swallowing a small amount of blood that leaked from where she bit her cheek, she slipped her blade back into her cleaver sheath to enact her plan.

Taking a deep breath and holding it, she charged towards the Grimm and swung the heavier weapon, it knocked an arm out of the way before she leaped over him and threw her weapon out quickly. The sheath flew out and went through the flesh of its leg and embedded itself into the wood, leaving forcing it to kneel in place. Throwing the rest of her weapon, it wrapped around its arm as it tried to pry itself free and pulled with all of her strength to leave it completely open, going
so far as to wrap it around her own wrist.

Her lungs were on fire as she dragged a breath back into her body, pain shot through her chest as she held on as tightly as she could as the cannon positioned itself and aimed directly at its head. It let out a massive roar as it began to pull Blake towards it, her feet skidded across the wet ground as it wrapped its arm around ribbon and pulled with its inhuman strength. She tried her best to step away, but with the deck covered in blood, there was just not enough traction for her.

She smelled the rot of its breath, saw the blood on its white face and dripping from long, white fangs in its mouth. Its glowing yellow and red eyes staring straight into her soul as it pulled at the ribbon, dragging her closer to her. With how taut the ribbon was, it was impossible for her to untie the ribbon from her end, so she watched her death slowly come closer as it pulled her closer and closer to it. It opened its mouth to roar, but it was quickly overtaken by the boom of the cannon.

In a heartbeat, the Alpha Ràn-Beowolf's head simply disappeared. There one second, then it exploded as the shot from the heavy cannon made sure it was reduced to pieces no bigger than a fingernail. The shot continued and exploded out in the distance as the Grimm's body went limp and began to fade away like all Grimm do. With the Alpha dead, all the others began to retreat, jumping back into the water and swimming away from the humans and faunus that defeated their leader.

Breathing deeply, Blake collapsed to the ground and stared up at the cloudy skies. They had won, they had survived.

Keeping her breaths shallow, she allowed herself to simply lay on the ground, her hair being soaked through with blood and sticking to her skin until someone walked up to her. Looking up, she saw the first mate smiling at her and bending over to help her up. "Good job, Ms Black." She said as Blake grabbed her hand and got back up to her feet. When she got up, the smile on the woman's face quickly faded and was replaced with a surprised look. Light hazel eyes looked above Blake and she was suddenly aware of the breeze around her head.

Her bow had somehow come undone in all of the fighting. She moved her ears around, as the woman took a step back and looked around slowly. "You're a faunus..." She nodded lightly and looked down, her ears drooped down slightly as she pulled the ribbon of Gambol Shroud and began to unwrap her wrist. "Did they follow you to us?"

"No." Blake quickly responded. "I didn't know they were here. I'm just trying to get to Mistral..."

"Bullshit! You were a deserter and they tracked you right to us!"

Blake was about to yell back at her when she heard the booming voice of the captain echo out near them. "Is there a problem, Ms Skye?" He asked looking between the two of them.

"Captain!" She pointed to Blake with an angry look in her eyes. "She lied to us! She was a faunus deserter the whole time and brought them down upon us. Without her-

"Without her, Ms Skye, we would have all been sunk to the bottom of sea! You know that the White Fang have been patrolling these waters for anything they can get their hands on. We would have been killed even if she wasn't on board!"

"But, Capti-

"Get me a head count, first mate! And double check to see the good have no been damaged. Dismissed" He left no room for discussion. She simply gave Blake a dirty look and stormed away,
kicking a decaying Grimm off the railing and letting it splash back into the water. When she was out of earshot, he simply shook his head and sighed. "She's a good lass, a bit headstrong but good...You alright, Ms Black?" He asked turning back to Blake and placed his hands behind his back.

She nodded lightly as she touched her chest and hissed from the pain. "I will be..." She sighed and looked around. The adrenaline fading away making her body know just how damaged she really was. She looked over and saw all the blood and damaged that was wrought from the Grimm and the White Fang. Guilt filled her heart as she sighed and shook her head. "I'm sorry." She said simply as she limped to the railing and looked over to the elemental storm that was still raging in the distance.

She quickly remembered the arm that was in her room. Quickly, she stowed her weapon onto her back and rushed down the deck and inside the ship where she got to the room she was assigned. Opening the door, she saw that the bed was still bolted to the floor, but the pillow and sheets were thrown to the other side with her case wrapped up in the blankets. Quickly making her way over to it, she placed it onto the bare bed and opened it up to ensure that it was not damaged.

She looked at the arm and saw that it had not moved at all, the foam was not damaged and everything was still in its place. With a relieved sigh, she locked it and placed it back into its place inside the closet before looking at herself in the small mirror in the room. Her natural, lightly tanned skin was covered in icor and blood, her ears bare for all to see and she needed to get another bow before reaching land. Wincing lightly, she made sure her room was locked before she began to discard her jacket on a coat hook and walked over to the night stand.

Finding the small door, on the wall, she slipped into the small bathroom that was with her room. Looking at it, it really was a cruise ship at some point. The bathroom was tiny, but efficient. With the shower taking up one of the corners of the room, right next to the toilet. Slowly, she began to gently carefully take her clothing off, one piece at a time so as not to hurt herself anymore. With her top off, she looked at herself in the mirror and saw the bruising already forming just under her breasts.

Turning her back, she saw the pattern of the White Fang member's cannon club imprinted onto her back from where she was hit earlier. Discarding the rest of her clothing, she stepped into the shower and closed the glass door behind her before turning the water on and allowing the cold water shock her system before heat began to seep into the liquid. Black and red blood began to fill the drain as it swirled down into the piping of the ship. She leaned her head against the glass wall as her mind began to wonder, letting the warm water soothe her muscles slowly.

Would it have been different if she had stayed? That thought had plagued her mind for the better part for four years now. Would Yang have forgiven her for allowing Adam to cut her arm off? Would Yang let her help her afterwards, could Blake defend Yang from Adam when he would go after her? Could Blake live with the thought if Adam came back and did more to hurt her? A sigh escaped her lips as she closed her eyes. Forcing the image of Yang, laying on the ground, blood pouring from the wound of her arm, out of her head.

Washing up, she managed to keep her water consumption fair low. Washing her body free of blood and gore and she managed to rinse her clothing as well in the same time. Hanging them to dry inside of the shower cell, she dried off and slipped her underwear back on before returning to the room where she replaced the pillow and the sheets and slipped inside. Her ears twitched to the noises of the ship around her. Quiet chatter and the splash of Grimm that were being thrown overboard and back into the water.
Once again, the gentle rocking of the ship lulled her into a state of relaxation, she could feel her Aura doing its best to knit her body back together and reset her ribs slowly. Her entire body hurt as she slowly rolled over onto her back and stared up at the ceiling, playing out all kinds of scenarios of what could have happened if she had stayed with Yang. Would she have been happy? Sad? Hurt? Comforted? So many thoughts clouded her mind and it was impossible for her to focus on a single one.

Weiss at Atlas. Penny being alive. Ruby and her drug. The mysterious man with the flask. Yang's biological mother, Raven. So much had happened in such a small amount of time for her, it was hard to filter through it all right then and there. So she thought, and thought until the sun had set and the moon showered the ship in a gentle glow. She worked through everything that happened to her until her eyelids felt heavy and her breathing slowed down lightly.

Her eyes closed for a second and when she opened them, Yang was standing next to her. Blake knew she was dreaming, but she did not care. She looked up at Yang and sniffed lightly. "I'm sorry..." She whispered out to the woman who was not standing in front of her. "I'm so sorry...I'm sorry for hurting you...I'm sorry for running from you...

"I'm sorry for loving you"

Chapter End Notes

Hello! Welcome back with another chapter Featuring Blake!

This chapter took me a while to write since I don't know what I'm doing...

Hopefully this chapter isn't too back, I always find writing Blake and Weiss harder than writing Ruby and Yang, mostly because I know exactly how their chapters are going to go until the end of the next arc....

Next chapter will be Yang and the answer to everyone's burning question; What happened to Taiyang?

Also, I'm sure you have noticed that this is now part of a series; and that means? Sequels! Two of them, so this story isn't going anywhere anytime soon!

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo. (We're top 100 baby! Woo! My dream is to make page 1 for kudos by the time this story ends) If you've already left a kudo, leave a comment. I love reading and replying to comments all the time. If you actually want to talk about my story or RWBY in general, head over to FF.net and look me up there and send me a PM. I love talking about this stuff. If you see something that doesn't look right, let me know and I'll fix it right away.

A throw out to my other series since I want to continue them a bit better. A Rose's Knight (Ruby/Jaune hurt comfort fic) and Scars We Choose To Show (Ruby/Weiss fluff fic going into a deeper story)

As always, thank you for taking the time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness.
Yang did not know how long she had been kneeling on the ground in front of her father's gravestone for, she just stared at the etched words into the black stone with yellow paint. Her father's name, a name she had known for her entire life. Memories of him played through her mind, all the happy memories she ever had with him playing one after another. Tears continued to roll down her cheeks as his voice and laughter echoed through her mind, never to be heard again.

She was pulled from her thoughts when something thick and heavy settled on her shoulders. Quickly looking around, she saw a large quilt was draped over her by a young woman with dark blonde hair. Lilac eyes met cerulean as the woman took a step back. "S-sorry! I didn't mean to startle you!" She said, slightly panicking. "It's just that it's starting to get dark out and it's getting a little chilly..." Looking around, Yang saw that the sky had turned a deep amber as the sun began to set.

"Thanks..." She said weakly as she got to her feet slowly, pulling the quilt tighter around her body. "He saved me, you know." Yang looked over at the woman, she was now staring at the gravestone, her hand rubbing her left arm gently. She was wearing a dark denim jacket and a flowery dress under it. Her dark blonde hair was tied up in a ponytail that only flowed to her shoulders. A pair of black boots on her feet kept her safe from the small rocks that littered the ground around them. She did not look much younger than herself. "If it wasn't for him, I'd be buried under the ground here."

Yang turned back to the stone and wiped her eyes with the back of her hand, trying to avoid scraping her weapon across her face. "What happened?" Yang asked finally.

The woman hesitated for a few moments before speaking. "When Vale fell, my dad and I were lucky enough to pack up some of our things before being forced to leave the city. We have family out here in Grey Rock so we didn't go to Vacuo with some of the other refugees. Instead, we left with rest who were willing to trek through the trees towards Port of Arrow to take a ship over. When we got here, we were attacked by a large group of Grimm out of nowhere.

"He told us to run towards the town, in the chaos of everyone running for safety I lost my father. When I looked back, he was laying on the ground because someone had pushed him out of the way and tripped him up. I ran to go save him but I was caught by a Deathstalker, then he showed up just as the beast's claws wrapped around my arm, punching it in the face. Watching him fight was like watching the Vital Festival, he was so fast and so strong. Like nothing, I've ever seen before."
"He thought the Deathstalker was done, but when he went to make sure I was okay, it came back and hit him with its tail. His Aura healed the wound and trapped the poison inside by the time he finally killed it. I think he thought I was you in his last moments. He kept calling me Yang and apologising to me for things. Just before he passed, he handed me these and said he loved me."

Looking over at her, the woman was holding a small stack of envelopes, tears in her eyes as she held them out to Yang for her to take. "The other Huntsmen said that they would take them back to his home when they came back, but they never did. So I held onto them since there was no way to get them to you at the time. But you're here now, so I can finally hand them to you..." She sniffled loudly as she blinked away tears. Taking them in her hand, Yang looked up at her and took a closer glance at the person in front of her.

With her blonde hair and the shape of her face, she could see how her dad might confuse the two of them. Especially since he was fighting off Deathstalker poison. Looking down in her hand, she saw the top of the stack in her hand had Yang's name written on the front in nice, cursive letters. Shifting the letters in her hand, the one under hers read Ruby's name. Curiously, there was a third. Using some dexterous hand movements, she read the name on its front.

Raven.

Why would he write her a letter? She pushed past the sudden urge to burn it in a nearby fire and had the woman hold onto Raven's and Ruby's letter while she gathered up the courage to read her father's last words to her. Turning it over, she pushed a fingernail under the sealing glue of the envelope and pried it open slowly. Pulling the folded sheet of paper out, she handed the empty envelope to her and let the paper open under its own weight. She knew what it was going to say, so with a last mental push, she read the letter.

Yang,

If you're reading this, then I guess you already know what happened.

I have fulfilled the Huntsmens Promise.

I'm sorry. I said I would come right back and I didn't, that makes me just as bad as Summer. I know no matter what I do, or what I say would ever be enough for breaking this promise to you, after everything that has happened to you, but I need you to know that I love you. I love you so much that if fulfilling the Huntsmens Promise again would protect you and Ruby then I would do it in a heartbeat five times over. You're my little sun dragon, and nothing will change that.

Hell, I don't even know if this is going to get back to you, it could get lost in the old mail system or be eaten or something, I'll just have to hope it does.

Under my bed, there's the actual will. It's in a small box with pictures of everyone so it won't be hard to miss.

I've left everything to you and your sister. The house, the land, whatever funds I have in my bank account and whatever insurance pays out with. That will last you until you can get back onto your feet and rest easy with the knowledge that no matter what, you'll always have a home to go back to. Even with the stupid cabinets that I let your uncle set up in the kitchen that requires a ladder to get at, let that be a lesson, never let your drunk family do things for you.

Now, you're probably wondering why I wrote a letter to Raven. To be perfectly honest, I don't really know. I know you searched for her when you're younger and I've gotten a few questionable reports about a blonde woman putting known thugs in the hospital, asking for information. (I'm
looking at you, missy) But I never stopped you because that was the path you had chosen to walk. I'm sure you'll come out of this stronger than ever before.

If, by some chance, you do find her. Can you deliver that letter for me? Sure, she left us when you when you were just born, but she was a big part of my life. She was my first love and the other half that brought you into the world. No matter what she did, she still has a place in my heart, right next to Summer, you and Ruby. If I could live this life again, I wouldn't try and keep Raven around, because of her, Ruby was born, and I can't imagine a world where she doesn't exist, it would be a world too dark to live in.

Now, you need to get out of this funk you've put yourself into and look out for Ruby since I'm not around anymore, I know she went to Mistral, but I'm worried about her. It's a big world, full of bad things, and there's nothing left I can do for either of you. Things may look dark, and the light of the world stopped shining long ago, but you're smart, strong and nothing keeps you down for long. (Like me) But most of all, never think you're alone out in the world.

No matter where you are if you keep me in your heart, I'll be there for you, watching over you from wherever I go when I die. The same can be said for Summer, she's watching over both of you just as I am right now. I'll make sure to tell her that you girls love and miss her with your whole hearts, 'cause the Gods know I do. At the end of the day, Yang. I need you to remember one thing.

You are never fighting alone. So get up, get going. I'll meet you there.

Love, now and forever.

Taiyang

P.S. If you can help it, make sure your uncle doesn't drink himself to death. Summer would kick his ass if he showed up here because he drank too much. He may be a prick most of the time, but he's still my best friend.

It took Yang several minutes to read through the letter, a fresh wave of tears overwhelmed her so she had to stop and wipe them away a couple of times so she could finish reading. When she finally did, she looked over at the gravestone and smiled softly. "I love you too, dad" She whispered softly as she wiped her nose on the back of her weapon. For the first time since her arm had been cut off, she felt so much lighter. A weight she did not know that was pressing on her soul was lifted by reading it.

"Cyan!" Looking over, Yang saw a man rushing over to them with an upset look on his face. When he got to them, Yang was having troubles trying to find a patch of skin on him that was not covered in tattoos. His whole body was a collage of beasts, flowers and colours. He had a buzzed head and a round face, glasses over his eyes and large weights in his ears that pulled and stretched his earlobes downward. He was wearing dark clothing, shorts that showed more beasts and colours around his ankles and reaching upwards.

"Hey, dad." The woman, Cyan, said quietly.

"I'm sorry, miss Huntress. I hope she didn't disturb you at all" The man said with a kind voice as he came and stood behind his daughter, hands on her shoulders lightly.

Yang shook her head and smiled up at the man lightly. "I'm sorry, miss Huntress. I hope she didn't disturb you at all" The man said with a kind voice as he came and stood behind his daughter, hands on her shoulders lightly.

"No. She didn't. She was just returning my dad's things to me" She said as she held up the letter before looking back at the gravestone. He looked over at the stone marker and nodded lightly. His eyes looked down at the ground as he took a deep breath and spoke softly.
"I'm sorry. It was my fault he died..."

"It's okay," Yang said as she wiped her face again, her eyes starting to sting from the constant wiping off of her tears. "He was a Huntsmen, we're all expected to fulfil the Huntsmen's promise some day" She looked down at her body and pulled the stump of her arm out from under the quilt draped over her shoulders. She was more than willing to fulfil that promise when she went to defend Blake from Adam. She flexed the muscles in her arm and felt her hand ball into a fist, despite that the flesh was gone.

"That was an impressive thing you did with your semblance," The father said as he saw her looking at the stump of her arm.

Yang just smirked slightly and shook her head. "It wasn't my semblance, it was my Aura." Remembering her fight with He Si Xong at the club in Jade, she now understood what she saw. Her aura ignited and she formed an arm made out of her soul. The Aura remembers what he body was like before, so it filled in what was missing. Just like what the older woman said.

"Well, it seems awfully inconvenient if your clothing gets blown apart every time you use it" He had a point, it was going to get very expensive if she keeps using this trick in a fight. Sure her tits could be used to a good distraction, but she could not walk around everywhere with half a shirt and jacket on at all times. Just as she was trying to think of a solution, the father spoke up again. "Well, if you're willing to sit still for a couple of hours and deal with pain, I think I have an idea.

"Before the Fall, I ran a tattoo shop. We specialised in Dust infused tattoos for Huntsmen and Huntresses, like yourself. By using a mixture of Dust and a special ink that I've developed, it would help you channel your Aura into a more stabilised form. Any Cyan can weave Dust into just about any kind of clothing, with her clothing you would be able to unleash your full strength without damaging anything you're wearing. If you want, anyways"

"Wouldn't that be, like, crazy expensive?"

"The price of my daughter's life outweighs anything I might use in making a tattoo for you," He said with a soft smile. "I would like to repay him by offering you whatever you want for free, it's the very least we can do..." Cyan smiled and nodded as Yang looked back at the gravestone. She took a deep breath before looking back at the letter and smiling a bit. With a nod and a determined look on her face, she smiled as the man and Cyan led them to their house.

Inside the two-story house, the kitchen table had all of the man's equipment scattered all over it as he guided her to sit down in a chair. Pulling on rubber gloves, he gathered inks and began to sprinkle Dust into the small cups to create the mixture that was going to be going into her skin. Removing the quilt and the small cape from her arm, she slowly pulled the destroyed shirt off her body and sat down in the offered chair. The man obviously had tattooed topless woman before since he did not bat an eye as she sat down.

Like a true professional, he pulled out a marker once everything was ready and tested out the small, handheld needle machine that would be marking her. "So, any ideas?" He asked as he pulled the cap off the marker and was ready to draw out her design across her skin. Looking back down at the letter in her hand, she smirked and nodded. Her father's little sun dragon was not so little anymore.

Neo was panicking, pacing inside of the room they had booked as she nervously looked at the clock on the wall every few seconds. It was nearly three in the morning and Yang had yet to show up yet. When Emerald had pulled her away from the greaving woman, Neo expected to return a few hours later and hold her until she had calmed down. Instead, she just vanished. Neo spent the
rest of the evening running through the surrounding forest and doing her best to ask the people of
the town if they had seen the blonde woman of her affection.

"Neo, relax. I'm sure she's fine" Of course, Emerald was not helping at all. She just looked around
a little then got supplies for the rest of their trip to Port of Arrow purchased and ready for the next
morning. She was laying in one of the beds in the room, her coat and boots were off and were
laying across one of the beds, filing her nails with disinterest. Angerly, Neo pulled out her scroll
and fingers began to fly across the keyboard as she typed out an angry response to the chocolate
skinned woman.

"How do you know that? She was shot, and set on fire from her own Aura! Plus she's greaving for
her father and now she's missing!"

Ruby eyes scanned the text message that was being held in front of her before sighing. "She's a
five foot eight, blonde bimbo with a tit out. She's not going to go anywhere without someone
noticing her" Neo clenched her teeth as she wrapped her hand around her device while trying to
make a fist. She was about to act on her anger when the door suddenly opened and all of her
worries were washed away in a tide of golden hair.

Yang walked into the room and looked at the two of them. Neo quickly ran to her and wrapped her
arms around her torso and held her close so that she would not disappear again. Earning a hiss from
the taller woman. Pulling back quickly, she looked up at her with concern eyes, only to see her in a
new outfit that when they left her in.

She was wearing a long, brown jacket that was trimmed with gold. An off-center zipper was half
undone, showing off some chest and her orange top. Her left sleeve stopped just before her elbow
and she wore a leather bracer on her forearm with her weapon compacted over it. Her other arm
was capped off with a golden plate where her arm ended. On her hips was a large brown belt that
sat over black jeans that went into knee high zipper boots with metal reinforcements. She also had
a purple bandana tied around her left knee.

"Easy, Neo. I'm still kinda sore" She saw that she was a little pale, and walked around her a little
stiffly. She watched as Yang eased herself onto the other bed as Emerald sat up and looked over at
her.

"Damn, where'd you get all that?" Emerald asked with a raised eyebrow.

"My dad saved a father and his daughter, they gave this to me as a thank you, but that's not all." She
said with a smile as she got up and pulled the zipper of her jacket off and set it down on the
bed. Under the brown jacket and orange top, Neo spied pitch black markings on her skin. Yang
lifted the shirt to her chest to reveal a large, black dragon in a tribal pattern crawling up from her
hip to her shoulder blade. The dragon's open mouth was pointed towards the stump of her arm with
one of its claws gripping her ribcage just under her breast.

In short, it was massive work of body art that would explain why Yang had disappeared for the last
couple of hours, but Yang was not done yet. She took a deep breath and concentrated on her new
tattoo and it began to glow slowly. The black turned bright gold as the heat began to come off of
her body, the eyes of the dragon glowed an angry red as flames began to trickle down its mouth and
began to slowly form the arm she had before, only it was much less explosive than before.

Neo could see the pattern of an arm and hand in the flames of her soul. Yang examined it and
turned her wrist this way and that, testing out the limits of her phantom limb. Satisfied, the flames
died out and the glow died from the tattoo, reverting it back to its original black ink. Yang smiled
and gave Neo a wink before sitting back down slowly, then began to explain what had happened to
her father. About his fight with the Deathstalker and the poison that killed him.

She then told them about the letters that he had left for her, her sister and her mother. The woman that Neo met on the train and backed off since she knew a bad fight when she saw one. "I need to go and find Ruby. She's been alone for too long and I've been a really shitty sister the last couple of years. I need to find her and make sure she's safe" The other two nodded and kept their eyes on her.

"Any idea where she is?" Emerald asked.

"Last time I talked to her, she said she was going back to the front"

"Well that could be fuck'n anywhere on the planet"

"Mistral is the only kingdom left other than Atlas that has any actual army structure. The Reclamation Army is just a bunch of people with weapons just trying to survive than a real army. If Ruby was being deployed anywhere, Mistral might have a record"

Yang read the message from Neo and nodded. Their destination was set in stone. Adam is in Mistral, and there's a chance that Ruby was as well. Reaching into her pocket, she tossed Emerald her flask who filled it up with a roll of her eyes before handing it back to her. Taking a look sip, she nodded and looked out the window at the shattered moon that hung int he sky. "All roads lead to Mistral"

Chapter End Notes

Oh boy.

I'm so sorry for the late post, but between being dragged to an Irish pub for St. Patrick's day and wasting my entire weekend to recover, my writing's been suffering lately. And it's only going to get worse with Mass Effect Andromeda coming out tomorrow, so I hope I can get another chapter done for the weekend.

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo! If you've already left a Kudo, please leave a comment! I love reading and replying to them. On that note, I also have a Tumblr (AngryFaceWritings) I have nothing on it. It's just a page and I have no idea what to put on it.

And as always, thank you for taking the time to read my slice of Madness.
Have I mentioned that Weiss is the hardest to write for me?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Remember, it needs to look like an accident"

Weiss looked at the man, seemingly the person in charge, as he stretched leather gloves over his hands. Looking around, everyone began to pull out simple weapons to use against her. A few pocket knives and a set of brass knuckles were tossed into the mix as they got ready. Each of them looked like everyday people. A homely woman, a street rascal, a lovely couple, a homeless woman, a businessman and an athlete with a baseball bat. She would have never expected such a troupe of people to be her end.

Slowly, they began to close in around her, forcing her to back further and further into a trash bin that has not been emptied for a number of days. Its reek was almost enough to make her gag as she stole a glance behind her and saw that she had maybe three feet of clear space behind her. Looking back in front of her, the homeless woman stepped forward with her hand out. Gesturing for her to give up the case in her hand. Mentally, she was slapping herself in the head for leaving her weapon in her apartment since she left in such a rush.

"Give it up, Ms Schnee. We'll make it painless for you" The woman said as she waved the knife in her general direction. Weiss narrowed her eyes at the woman, slowly she reached out and went to hand the woman the case, but before her hand wrapped around the handle, Weiss let the handle slip from her fingers and it fell to the ground. In the brief moment of her trying to catch the falling case, Weiss latched onto the woman's wrist holding the knife and performed a textbook body throw. Tossing her into the trash bin, scattering its contents all over the ground.

While she was not proficient in hand to hand combat, it was still something she was required to learn while in the accelerated specialist program Atlas had designed after the attack on Atlas. Lucky for her, her short height made it much easier for her to throw people and disarm them. Turning to face her attackers, she switched her hold on the knife into a reverse grip and slipped into a ready stance. "Kill her!" The leader said before everyone charged towards her.

Weiss quickly ducked under the baseball bat slashed at his wrist, his aura flashed in his defence as she dodged a knife slash towards her face. With such a small area to fight in, they were limited to how many people could attack her at once. However, it was still an outnumbered fight against her so she could not block or dodge everything. She caught a knuckle duster to her stomach, causing her to double over as the air was forced from her lungs. A pair of arms wrapped around her body, pinning her arms to her sides and lifting her into the air.

Struggling against her attacker, she could not force her arms out from under his arms as others
quickly descended onto her. Throwing her head back, she felt a face connect with the back of her skull. Pain shot through her brain as the man cried out and his grip on her loosened enough for her to fall back onto her feet. Pulling herself out of his hold, swiped with her knife to create some space before backing up just a little bit more, if this was the end then she was going to fight till her last breath to get the truth out.

Cautiously, they began to spread out and surround her. Making sure she could not escape while understanding that she would not go down easily. Her position in the military was not a simple gesture since she is a Schnee, she earned it through sacrifice, blood and dedication to her kingdom. She knew that it was not going to be easy to escape them, but she needed a plan. She needed to create enough room for her to pick up the case, meaning she needed to take at least three of them out enough for her to get the moment she needed.

She waited until one of them got the courage to attack her, the baseball bat again went for her head. Once again, she ducked under it and ran forward quickly and managed to slip past the line of attackers and got to her case. Quickly, they tried to attack her while she was crouched down and distracted by whatever she was doing inside of the case. Just before a knife blade could cut into her flesh, a wall of ice came up between the two of them. It shattered when the woman pulled her arm out of the ice and took a step back.

Standing with the case in her hand, Weiss had discarded the knife in favour of holding thin Dust vials between her fingers. While it was true, Weiss was not the most proficient in hand to hand combat, she could count on her hand those who were better than her in the art of Dust manipulation. A series of Glyphs appeared around the area and under her feet. Using her understanding of Dust, she moved at unbelievable speeds using the case as a weapon to attack her attackers.

First to receive her fury was the athlete with the baseball bat. The case to his knee brought him down to her level where he got a face full of a corner of her case, knocking him to the ground and stealing his consciousness away from him. Spinning around, she erected another wall of ice just as she was about to be hit again with a strike from a set of brass knuckles. Deciding that she had wasted enough time in dealing with these people, she used the rest of the Dust she was holding and summoned an Ursa Grimm in the small confines of the alleyway.

Frozen with fear, three of them were knocked into the walls by the beast's massive paws and the other fled the scene, obviously they were not paid enough to deal with a Grimm so the rest ran off while dropping their weapons in pursuit of safety. Looking over those who were abandoned by their teammates, Weiss banished the summoned Grimm into a small pile of snow that blew away into nothingness before leaning down over the leader of the group and turning him onto his back.

He had a small cut on his forehead and was snoring lightly from his unconscious state. Checking his pockets, she found his wallet and checked the identification card that was inside of it. The man's name was Alkmene Gift, and according to the keycard he kept in his wallet, he worked at the main office of the Atlesian Medical Services. The same building where the Surgeon General, better known as Chancellor Watts, had his office. She should have known it would trace back to him when she called looking for Doctor Pinot.

Looking at the ID's of the other three, it showed just how far his reach went. A police officer, a nurse and a high ranking member of the SDC. Chancellor Watts had strings in almost every aspect of Atlesian society, including her own company. Leaving them to their fate, Weiss left the alleyway and began to make her way to the military base, albeit in a calmer manner to that she did not arouse suspicion, in case someone was actively watching her at the moment.
Within half an hour, she arrived at the first gate and was passed through without complaint after showing her identification to the soldier posted there. Making her way across the base, she kept looking at the people around her, trying to figure out who was under the Chancellor's thumb and who was not. Through the halls and corridors of the main building, she made her way to the office of General Ironwood and was about to knock on the door when it sudden opened and was nearly about to knock on his chest instead.

"Specialist Schnee," He said in surprise. "I was about to call you in."

"You were?" She asked, obviously caught off guard.

"Yes, the Council is calling a meeting and you were requested to attend." He said simply as he closed the door behind him.

Alarms went off in Weiss's head as General Ironwood said that. If the Council specify asked for her, could Watts already know that his hit squad failed? With no time for a meeting with Ironwood since he had something he needed to do before the Council convened, Weiss had to get a set of dress whites from the uniform department on base and went to change in the locker room. Looking at herself in the mirror of the room, she made sure her uniform was set.

Borrowed black boots that were polished just to code went up to her knees, white pants with a sharp crease down the centre of each leg. A grey jacket was a little too big for her but was held by a thick white belt that was tightened high on her waist, just above her navel. A dark grey tie was tightened against her neck and tucked into the jacket as she buttoned it up. Slipping a deep blue armband with her specialist rank on it to her left bicep, while technically improper it was allowed since she did not have enough time to go back home for her proper uniform with all her medals and ranks sewn into them.

Pausing just long enough to hide her case filled with the truth in a locker, she made her way to the waiting transport that would bring her and the General to the Council chamber in the heart of Atlas. The two of them made their way past bureaucrats and higher members of Atlas's society until they reached the Council chamber. It was a large round room with a ring table with five seats spaced evenly around them. Two Chancellors were already there, talking idly to each other when they arrived.

The first was Chancellor Watts, sitting in his spot as the Head of Public Health of Atlas. Behind him stood the man she had left in the alleyway with a noticeable cut on his forehead. While Watts simply looked at them, nodded, and resumed his conversation, Alkmene was giving her a death glare and gently rubbing his wound. The second Chancellor was the Head of Public Relations. Everything from general education to social programs to infrastructure and everything in between ran through her office. Autumn Caroline was a strong willed and determined woman.

Her charcoal skin marked her as someone who was originally from Vacuo but she made her mark in Atlas in a big way. She was wearing a simple, dark red/brown jacket with a matching pencil skirt and heels. Her hair tightly braided to her scalp and tied off in a ponytail that fell down her back. Her smile bright against her dark skin as General Ironwood took his seat and pulled out a folder with his points to make this meeting.

"General, thank you so much for coming so soon, and for bringing Specialist Schnee as well" The woman nodded to Weiss, who simply politely nodded to her and stayed silent. "We're just waiting for Dorado and his assistant now" On cue, the door behind them opened up once again, but instead of Chancellor of Kingdom Finances, stood her younger brother Whitely. Wearing a white suit with a deep blue shirt under it, he smiled at everyone and nodded gently, a slight moment of surprise passed his face before it was pushed aside upon seeing Weiss.
"Ah, Whitely," Watts said as he stood up to greet the young man "Where is the Chancellor?" He asked lightly.

"I'm sorry to inform you that Chancellor's health has taken a decline and will not be joining us." He said as he reached into his jacket and produced a letter and handed it to Watts. "He asked me to go as his stand-in for this meeting. This is his letter of merit and signature" After the older man looked it over, he nodded it and handed it to Autumn, who verified it and handed it to Ironwood who did the same and handed it back to her brother. With everyone's approval, he took his seat as the Kingdom's treasurer and now, everyone was accounted for.

With General Ironwood being the general of the army and the headmaster of the Huntsmen's academy, he filled two seats on the council, leaving the fifth chair empty for ceremonial reasons only. Once everyone was settled, Ironwood placed both hands on the table and laced his fingers together. "You called this meeting, Chancellor Watts. Care to inform the rest of us on the reason?" He asked lightly, only a hint of frustration coming out from his voice.

Watts leaned back slightly and folded his legs under the ring table before speaking. "I was hoping to discuss a possible ending to this war, General." He began. "Three years is long enough, I believe. I think it's about time to end it once and for all" Weiss could almost hear Ironwood grind his teeth as the floor was opened up.

"And how are you planning on doing that?" The general asked.

"From my understanding, all military organisation in Vale is pretty much none existent. Vacuo is holding onto a few chains of command while Mistral is still pretty much untouched. I propose a single, hammer strike against the remaining army of Vacuo with a Third Assalut and a Fourth Assault invasion of Mistral. Then, once everything is done, we come in with security forces and ensure compliance under Atlesian law."

All eyes were on Chancellor Watts as he put forth his plan out on the table for all to listen. Weiss could hardly believe what she was hearing, Watts wanted to simply burn the other kingdoms to ash and build on top of them. The General shook his head lightly and spoke up. "This isn't an ending to a war, this is the beginning of a massacre. You're opening the door to separatist and insurrectionist movements! How can you hope to police the entire world?"

"I see no other choice. How are we supposed to protect the people of this world if we're all fighting each other over simple matters, not only that but we can't compromise with them if they refuse to negotiate with us"

"Have they not responded to our request for a cease-fire?" Autumn asked looking over at Ironwood.

"No, they continue to ignore any requests for negotiations..." He sighed. "."

"So we have no choice then," Whitely spoke up and turned to the moustached man. "What do you propose?"

"I propose pulling all our reserve forces out of Vacuo and redeploying them in Mistral, while at the same time, deploying what military strength against the last of the Vacuo defence, then once they're dealt with, they will join the Mistral offensive as support. And I want Specialist Schnee to lead the Vacuo force" All eyes turned to her as she stood behind and to the side of General Ironwood. Weiss and Watts locked eyes and she understood why he wanted her to lead the force. It was pretty much suicide with Ruby being there, while his men failed, the war will surely kill her.
"She just returned from Vacuo and is on leave, and you would send out right back out already?" Ironwood asked.

"The sooner we end this war, the sooner she can return to her life. The sooner we can all return to the days where we can hold meetings that don't balance the lives of thousands of people every day. The sooner it ends, the sooner we can instal peace and security to the world." He then paused and looked to each of the other members of the council and raised his hand lightly. "All in favour?" Everyone looked over at General Ironwood and he shook his head.

"I cannot allow this to happen. Too many lives would be lost to these offensives and the payoff wouldn't be worth it. I vote against two-fold" He said as he placed both palms on the table and shifted his gaze over to Autumn. She met everyone's eyes and finally looked down at the dark wood that made up the ring table they sat at. She was silent for a few long moments before taking a deep breath and closing her eyes.

"The faster the war is over, the faster we can rebuild." She said finally as she raised her hand finally. Two for, two against. All the eyes went to Whitely Schnee, who was mostly silent for the whole meeting. He took a deep breath and looked at each of the other council members before Watts spoke up.

"As the stand-in, you have the final vote." He said with a small nod. He looked over at Weiss and they stared into each other's eyes and tried to each other's mind. Sure, they did not always get along and were often on separate sides of the arguments that happened at home when she was younger. He had to know what she was going to be sent to.

He took a deep breath and looked away from her. "I vote for." He said finally. A weight settled on her body as the words left his mouth. "If anyone could lead the strike team to victory, it's Specialist Schnee" She looked away from her brother, who had just filed her death sentence. Closing her eyes, she pushed her emotions away to remain still as the meeting was still underway. With that said, Watts looked over at her and stared her down. She knew that he had her now, and he was going in for the kill.

"Can you do this, Specialist?" He asked. He sounded confident in her abilities, but she could hear the subtle hints of malice and ill intent coming off of it. "Can you overcome adversity and follow the Council's will? or is it too much for you?" She knew what he really told her under this question, she will either lead the attack and be killed or refuse and be branded a traitor to her kingdom and a deserter to the military. Coming to attention, she snapped her heels together and turned to face the Chancellor.

"I will take Ritrr, Sir." She said as she was given the order. Watts nodded knowingly and the had adjourned the meeting at last. As she and the general walked out, her brother tried to apologise to her but she simply ignored him, there were more important things to take care of at the moment. It was only when they got into the car to drive back to the base, did the general sigh deeply.

"I'm sorry. I tried but that's how democracy works. I got outvoted." He said as he ran his hand through his hair.

She simply nodded and stayed silent for the rest of the ride to the base. She returned the uniform she borrowed and changed back into her clothing from before. She was going to be watched by Watt's men now until she left, so there was no chance to talk to General Ironwood without causing suspicion and it coming back to cause problems. So she left the evidence of the truth on base, in a place where Watt's men could never find it. Going home, she got her things ready and left before the sun rose in the sky.
Walking up the ramp to the Bulkhead, she took one last look at her home, unsure if she will ever come back. Dressed in her battle attire, she pulled the rucksack over her shoulder and boarded with the few others going back to the Vacuo front to get ready for the Third Assault as the Fourth Assault was getting prepared to go to Mistral.

Here she sat, mentally preparing for approaching day where she would march an army and face off against her former partner, a little red girl with a massive red scythe. Who was once happy and bubbly, and now reaped the dead across the battlefield as the Red Death.

As the Bulkhead lifted off, she tried to remember better days, cause they might be her last.

Chapter End Notes

And with that, this very very late chapter is finally posted.

This seriously took me about a week to write since I'm the worst with Weiss. So I'm sorry it's so late.

The next chapter is going to be a Jaune Chapter! (Yay!) So get ready for that, I'm hoping it'll be up soon so keep an eye out.

So, last chapter we passed a milestone 300 kudos! I would like to thank the person who made that tick over, but it was a guest so thank you, whoever you are! At the time I'm posting this, How Could You Be My Enemy is in place 65 via kudos, so thank you for all your support!

Also, I have a Tumblr now, (AngryFaceWritings) and I will be posted previews of my stories periodically as well as random little snippets of ideas just wondering around my head. There's nothing there right now but come by and say hi, I'd love to talk about my stories or ideas for other stories!

So if you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo. If you already have, leave a comment, I love getting them and reading them through the day. And as always, thank you for taking the time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness!

Edit: if you came looking for chapter 25, Sorry about that. I thought I hit the save without posting button instead of the post. Jaune's chapter will be up this week though. Sorry for the confusion.
The much anticipated Jaune chapter is finally here!

See the end of the chapter for more notes
Okay, now assuming you're not cheating, we can take a break." His instructor gave a light giggle as she spoke. Jaune let out a deep sigh as he closed his eyes, letting his body relax a little as he stood up from his stance. He dropped his sword into a relaxed reverse grip and his head drooped slightly, letting her voice soothe his sore muscles. "I know this can be frustrating..." He looked over at his instructor and made his way towards her. Walking up three steps and out of the sand as he picked up his scroll and looked down at the cracked screen gently.

"...and it can feel like so much effort to progress such a small amount, but I want you to know that I'm proud of you. I've never met someone so determined to better themselves. You've grown so much since we started training. And this is just the beginning." His instructor, Pyrrha, said to him with a small smile on her face. Behind her was Beacon, unbroken and whole, like they all were once upon a time. Though they were years apart now, she still spoke to him like this, the pre-recorded messages she made for him so he could continue his training over the break during the winter.

"Jaune, I-I..." He knew this part, how many times has he lived through this pain, watching her as she struggled with her emotions to him. She looked away from the device she used to record this and struggled with her words. How blind and stupid he was those few, short years ago. He could see it in her eyes now, the way she looked at him like that, if only he had noticed sooner maybe he could have stopped her somehow, some way.

She looked back at the camera, at him, and placed a hand over her heart and smiled softly. "I want you to know that I'm just happy to be a part of your life. I'll always be here for you, Jaune." He watched as the video stopped suddenly and grew smaller and slipped back into place with the other two dozen videos she had recorded for him. He did not know how long he stood there, staring at his device as he remembered all the times he had with the fire-haired woman. The device darkened and the screen turned black due to inactivity, and he was left staring at his own scared face.

With a pained sigh, he turned the screen on again and loaded up the next training video she made for him and set it back onto the small stand he had for the device before returning to his place in the training sand. "Alright, Jaune, just like we practised. Follow these instructions. Shield up." He followed the instructions and was ready for the first action when the door to the area suddenly slide open with the sound of wood hitting wood. Only a handful of people were able to interrupt his training without him getting angry, and she was one of them.

The mother of Pyrrha Nikos walked towards him, she looked almost exactly like her save for age touching her features lightly and her eyes being a deep blue rather than rich emerald. Her hair was also a few shades darker than her daughter's only highlighted her maturity. She was wearing a traditional clothing from the eastern Mistrali coast, a large white chiton that fell down her shoulders and down to her ankles. A small belt around her waist with simple emeralds hanging from her ears and a familiar headdress was all the accessories she wore.

Even with the simple flat sandals, she wore that was fastened up her ankles, she was at eye level with him, marking just one more thing she had inherited from her mother. Her sun-kissed arms were bare from her clothing as she made her way to him, extending a towel to him with a small smile on her lips. Jaune slipped the blade between his arm and the shield before accepting it from her with a nod. "Thank you, Mrs Nikos," Jaune said as he wiped the sweat off his face and took a deep breath of the clean material.

"Jaune, how many times do I need to tell you," She began as she placed a hand on his shoulder. "Call me Pyralis," He nodded again as he looked up at the scroll that was still playing, casting her daughter's voice into the room as she gave her instructions. Pyralis looked over at it and he saw the pain in her eyes, hearing her voice again was just as painful, if not more, for her than it was for
him. Reaching up, he squeezed her hand gently before walking over to his scroll and turning the video off before they could share in their sorrow again, simply crying over the loss of partner and daughter.

"Was there something you needed?" He asked her after he put away the practice equipment he was using in training and turned to her. His voice brought her out of whatever memory she had become lost in and looked at him.

"Members of the council is here to see you." She said softly with a sad smile. Jaune nodded and began to dry off the rest of his body with haste since he did not want to keep the governing body of Mistral waiting for him. Throwing his black shirt over his head, he paused at the door and bowed lightly, a simple gesture that honoured Pyrrha's ancestors as a thank you for using their training sands. Walking next to Pyralis, once again thanked her for letting him stay with her in her large house while he was in the city.

"Please, Jaune. It's no problem at all for me, it's been nice having someone else in the house. It makes feel a lot less empty" She told him with the same sad smile he saw her make whenever the topic went to her family. Her husband died during the Second Assault and she was given a medical discharge from the military, leaving her alone in the large house that Pyrrha's fame had bought them. Championships and endorsement deals brought much wealth to the family, more than enough to live a comfortable life, but with no one to share it with, it all seems pointless.

Soon enough, they arrived in the living room and the members of the Mistral Council got out of his seats to greet them. Jaune noticed that the table had a large purple cloth over it with something under it, but before he could ask about it, his attention was pulled to the men who now stood before him. One he recognised as the Spartan commander a few weeks ago from the swamplands, where Jaune stopped a vanguard push which prevented the defensive line from crumbling. He wore the blue and green camouflage with a dark beard and braid wrapped around his head.

The second man he did not recognise. He was a tall man with rich, golden hair. He had pale green eyes and a large goatee that dominated his mouth and chin. He wore a white and gold outfit with a lanyard that wrapped around his neck and into a breast pocket. He shook Jaune's hand and he could feel the man's strength, but he used only the most minimal touch to shake Jaune's hand. Looking between the two of them, the commander spoke, gesturing to the man. "Lad, this is professor Lionheart from Haven Academy. Professor, this is Jaune Arc"

"An honour, Mr Arc." The professor said the only hint of a smile he got was when the ends of his moustache twitched upwards. "The Commander Crimson has told us much of your victories in the past," Jaune nodded simply as he looked over at the commander, who simply took a step back and slipped his hands behind his back. "On behalf of the other council members, we cannot thank you enough for your dedication and sacrifice to protecting a home that isn't yours"

"You honour me, professor, but I'm just honouring my friend's memory by doing what she would have done."

Lionheart nodded light and cleared his throat. "Yes, well, your actions have caused quite a stir with the people. You are more than a Huntsmen, you're a symbol of hope that maybe one day, we can drive back the Atlesians from our home. In olden times, when Anima was filled with different kingdoms, instead of having all out wars, generals from different armies would often elect a champion or guardian to fight each other, saving the lives of countless people. Entire wars were often waged by only a few people and the generals were expected to honour the outcome.

"The council members, myself included, have all decided that what we need right now is a champion to lead us out of these dark days. There was a unanimous decision in our choice of who
that should be. We would like to give this honour to you, Jaune," He said with a small gesture. Jaune was stricken silent, he did not know what to say. Should he take the mantle? Could he protect an entire kingdom when he could not even protect his own partner? He was about to ask if he could have some time to think about it when he felt a hand on his shoulder.

Looking back at Pyralis Nikos and all thoughts of doubt left his mind. If given the same offer, he knew what Pyrrha would do. Looking back at professor Lionheart, Jaune took a deep breath and nodded to him. "I accept this honour" Jaune said softly. The council member let out a breath of relief as he beckoned Kaune closer to him. Turning to face the table, Jaune stood with him as he looked at the purple cloth and the shapes under it.

"Thank you, Jaune. This means a lot to so many, more than you know. So please, accept these gifts on behalf of the council," Pulling the cloth off, the headmaster of Haven academy revealed a full set of new armour. Pure, snow-white with golden trim breastplate and shoulder guard. Gauntlets that went up to his elbows with reinforced gloves to go with it. Greaves and boots in a matching pattern lay below the breastplate and next to them was a sword and scabbard.

Slowly, he reached out and picked up the modified Crocea Mors and pulled it out of the collapsed shield. He admired the craftsmanship of the sword and shield, they had made the blade longer without taking away or altering the weight shift at all. The same could be said for the shield, he opened it and saw the familiar shape under the double crescent moon of his house. He gave the blade a few experimental swings before sliding it back into place and placing it all back onto the table.

"I hope it's to your liking," Lionheart said cautiously as he nervously tapped against the breastplate, just making sure it worked.

"Yes, thank you"

"Mrs Nikos was generous in providing the metal from her family's personal reserve in making this for you. I know it means a lot to her" Jaune looked back at the woman and she smiled at him as she gently traced the gold trimming that ran the length of the handguard on his sword.

"This metal has been in my family since ancient times, back when warriors were decided at the moment of birth. Young ones would journey into the mines and select their own ore to mine before bringing it back to be forged into their weapons and armour. But now there's no one left to carry the Nikos bloodline, so I give it to you. It's what she would have wanted." She blinked quickly and cleared her throat to stop the onslaught of tears threatening to pour out. He simply reached out and squeezed her shoulder lightly, anchoring her gently.

"Thank you" He whispered to her as he looked over his new armour and weapons and left to wash his body of the sweat and sand from his training. He scrubbed his skin in the large bath area of the house, he ensured each part of his body was free of filth before he would touch the armour that was gifted to him. He stood waist deep water and dragged a razor over his face, ridding himself of the stubble that had been growing for the past few days. As his body was cleaned, he noticed more and more scars on his tanned skin as he cleaned himself, a soft sigh as he remembered a few were from his training on the rooftops.

When he was satisfied with his cleanliness, he dried himself off and began to pull clean clothing over his body. Faded blue jeans that were easy to move around in and a tight, black shirt over his body. fully dressed, he walked down the hallways to the back yard where Pyralis was waiting for him. Next to her was his new armour and weapons on a table, next to her was a statue of old gods that were worshipped in times of wars hundreds of years ago.
Walking up to the table, he grabbed a gauntlet and slowly pulled it over his hand, slipping his fingers into each spot with ease. Everything fit perfectly as he pushed his feet into the greaves and the shoulder guard slipped over his left arm. Finally, the breastplate was pulled over his head and was clipped and tightened into place. He pulled Crocea Mors to his side and it slipped into its place on his belt. When he was fully armoured, he pulled the last addition to his new armour off the table and ran the material through his fingers. he turned to her mother and knelt in front of her.

A deep red sash, the same colour as Pyrrha's hair and her family bond. Gently, he wrapped it around his waist and tied it off to the side like she always had with her armour. With that in place, he turned to her mother and knelt in front of her.

From behind her, she pulled Pyrrha's shield, Akoúo̱, off a table and handed it to him slowly. Gently, carefully, he took the shield and slipped it onto his back and it clicked into place. Reaching behind her once more, she pulled the repaired blade, Miló, offered it to him. Gripping the handle with one hand and carefully holding it with his other hand, he turned it and placed the tip against the ground as he rested his forehead against the handguard, a silent prayer to his Goddess for her protection, for it is only in passing that they achieve immortality.

A pair of hands forced him to look up at Pyralis, she was kneeling down to his level and staring into his eyes. Sorrow and concern flooding her features as she leaned forward and pressed her lips against his forehead. "Trust in her, as she did you, Jaune." He nodded as he stood up slowly and slipped the blade in its place on his back, between his armour and her shield before leaning in and holding the older woman close to him. He held her gently as she clutched to him, wishing for him to stay, but knowing he needed to go.

Eventually, she released him and nodded to him. She wiped tears from her cheeks as he turned and walked away from her and towards wherever the people of Mistral needed him.

"Knight!"

He stopped and looked back at Pyralis Nikos as she took a deep breath. The fight returning to her form for one last moment.

"Return with that shield, or on it"

He nodded to her, knowing the weight of her words. The last thing she saw was her daughter's shield on his back as he left her alone in the large, empty house. Her words echoing through her mind, to either return with a victory or to die with honour. He knew that he would die one day, it was his one hope, the one thing that made him get up and march onto the field of battle every day. For his actions and deeds, that one day, he would be forgiven.

Chapter End Notes

First off, I'm sorry for anyone who tried to read this chapter when it was accidentally posted at the beginning of the week. I wasn't paying attention and hit the wrong button. So sorry for that, but here it is at last.

I know it's not really much of an action packed chapter, but I promise you that the war is coming back in full force! I just hope you all enjoyed a slower paced chapter if not, Ruby is next in the rotation and that's going to be fun!
If you enjoyed, please leave a kudos, (So many kudos! I love all of you!) If you already left one, please please please leave a comment. I love reading them and replying to them. I also have a Tumblr (AngryFaceWritings) that I do nothing with but drop a message, I love talking about stuff and things. And as always, thank you for taking time out of your busy days (And nights) to read my slice of madness!
On the first day, Ruby went to visit Sun in his bed in the medical building on the base. Sitting in a chair next to his bed, she reflected upon the man before her, a person who would bear the world on his shoulders to help a friend out. She stayed by his side for hours, simply replaying memories in her head of all her encounters with him from before the fall where everything seemed like it was perfect. His kindness and open heart instantly make her like the man and consider him a friend.

On the second day, he was nowhere to be found. She had feared the worst before she found him inside another room, talking to one of the doctors. Deciding that he was out of danger, she went on patrol and made sure there were no Grimm inside the dead buildings of the city they were not using. Only finding a lone Beowolf every few hours, she was left alone with her thoughts. Not the best way to kill a few hours, the Red Death's occasional whispers and the ghost of her mother stopping any train of thought her only companions.

On the third day, she expected him to still be in bed. Instead, he was sitting on top of it reading a piece of paper when she entered. Looking up from his reading, he grinned at her and set it down. "Hey, Ruby!" He said happily. Walking to the chair next to the bed, she sat down and smiled lightly, probably the first time in years she actually smiled. He was not wearing a shirt, so his broad shoulders and muscular chest were on full display, save for his precious abs that were under layers of sterile white bandages.

He was wearing his jean shorts that were cut off at his knees and was sitting cross-legged on his bed. His tail was wrapped around his waist the best it could, it's shorter length not being able to wrap all the way around. "Hey, Sun," She said simply as she got comfortable in the terrible chair. "Shouldn't you be in bed resting?" She asked as she saw that the four others in the room were asleep and resting quietly.

"Sheesh, you sound like the nurses," He said with a roll of his eyes. "I can't really sit around, not that kinda guy." Ruby understood that. There were a few times where her Aura gave out and was wounded enough to land herself in a medical bed, being forced to lay in bed for days as she healed naturally nearly drove her insane with pent up energy.

"Yeah, I get that." She said lightly with a nod. "So what were you reading?" She asked pointing to the piece of paper he was reading before she entered.

"Oh! A letter from the guys back in Mistral" He said as he picked it up to show her. "Nep was just telling about this girl he met. Apparently, she's super cute..." He said as he set the paper down and looked at her.
"You get letters from your team?"

"All the time, I just haven't really gotten a chance to read them in a while, been too busy." The monkey faunus said as he stretched his back out then winced from his wound. "I'm sure you get letters from your family, right?" Ruby was silent for a few moments before speaking, avoiding his eyes.

"The last letter I got told me my dad died."

It was Sun's turn to be quiet for a few moments before speaking. "Oh," He said simply. "I'm sorry to hear that."

"Yeah..."

"How's Yang?"

"Drunk..."

"Have you seen Blake lately?" He asked.

"And if you get in my way again, you will be my enemy as well."

"No." She lied.

"I hope she's alright, not the best place for the faunus right now..." He said as he rubbed his side lightly.

"Why are you here, Sun?" She asked, finally looking over at him. "Weren't you from Mistral?"

"Yeah, but I was born in Vacuo. I couldn't just sit in Mistral and let my home be attacked by Atlas, y'know?"

She nodded and ran a hand through her, realising how long her hair had grown, maybe it was time for a haircut. A comfortable silence passed between the two of them as she just sat in the chair and relaxed a bit. He continued to read his letter as his tail twitched lightly when she asked him what happened to it, he told her that it got caught by a sniper. He can not hold himself up like he used to anymore. He seemed sad about that most of all. When he finished reading the letter, he pulled out a pad of paper that was near the bed and began to write back.

He looked at her as he tapped the pen to the pad of paper in though and raised his eyebrow.

"What..."

"Nothing!" Ruby blurted out. "It's just I never thought of you the kind to write out letters..."

Sun laughed a bit as he balanced the pen between his nose and upper lip and went cross-eyed to watch it. "Well, with the towers down, I can't really get a message out to them. So I write."

"But won't the letter not get there for weeks?"

"Well, yeah," He said as he flopped onto his back and rubbed his bandaged wound lightly. "But it's not just about talking to them, it's also about letting things out. I always talked to the guys about what's bothering me back in Haven, and while they can't get back to me right away, it just feels good to get it off your chest. Y'know?" Ruby nodded in understanding, lightly scratching at the inside of her elbow. She could feel the scabs under her white sleeve. "You should try it, maybe write to Yang and see what she's up to. Might make you feel better."
Ruby looked up and raised an eyebrow at him as he eyed her up from his bed. "What makes you think that I feel bad?" She asked him. He simply pointed at her as he laid across his bed.

"I can see it in your eyes. Something's bothering you but since you haven't actually said anything to me, you probably won't tell anyone. So writing it down might help." He closed his eyes lightly and pushed his hands under his head.

So now she sat on her bunk. A pad of paper in her lap and a pen in her hand, staring at a blank sheet as she tried to will words from her mind onto the paper like so many times before. She sighed heavily as she tapped the pen against her thigh, wondering what she would write to Yang. How the war was going, what her day to day life was like, maybe seeing Sun again after so long. Despite the fact that she has been trying to write for the last hour, all she had gotten so far was her sister's name in the top of the page.

"Watcha doing, Rose?"

Looking up from her letter in the making, she saw Midori leaning against the lockers at the end of their tent. In his hands were one of the terrible protein bars that they give out with their rations. They were so hard that the only way anyone could eat them was by soaking them in some water for a few minutes and letting it soften up. Instead of doing that, he was using his combat knife to shave off strips that were thin enough where he could just eat it without breaking his jaw.

"Nothing," She said quickly as she began to put the pad of paper away before he could see what she was up to.

"The last time you were doing nothing, I had to catch you from the ceiling of a church." He pointed out as he brought his knife up to his mouth and began to chew on the strip. She sighed and shook her head.

"Fine. I'm writing a letter..." She told him as she pulled the pad of paper back into her lap to try and continue what she was writing.

"To who?" He asked with a raised eyebrow.

"My sister."

"You have a sister?" He said, surprised at the sudden information.

Ruby nodded simply. "I haven't seen her in a couple of years. Don't even know what to say to her," He nodded lightly as he took another slice of the bar and spoke with his mouth half full of hard food stuff.

"What's she like?"

A small smile crept onto her smile as she remembered her sister. "She's bright, happy all the time and protective as all hell over me. Nothing could knock her down, and if they did, she'd get back up with twice the force and smile her way through any problem. Our mom died when we were just young, well my mom, we had different moms. Anyways, I was really sad for a long time so she did everything to try and cheer me up. For my birthday that year, Yang got me this Beowolf stuffie that I saw in the window of a store we passed every day.

"At first, our dad was really mad at her since she stole the money from him to get it, but I was so happy with the present that he forgave her for it. She said it was the first time in months that I was so happy. She raised me by herself for a few years until our dad got a hold of himself, he was pretty bad after mom died. But then during the Fall, she lost her arm trying to protect our teammate and
she was never the same after that. Our dad died shortly after and she began to drink, a lot."

She gave up on the letter for the time being and just looked at her second in command of her squad. "Why are you surprised that I have a sister? I thought you knew everything about me." She asked as she shifted over to the edge of her bed and let her legs hang over the side. Midori just laughed a little and shrugged lightly.

"My son knew everything about you. He was your biggest fan. He wanted to be just like you." He smiled as he looked off into the distance lightly. "I remember him watching your first round fight three times a night and looking up everything about you on the Rema-net. Youngest Huntress to be accepted into Beacon, made a leader of your team no less. I promised him that we'd go to the next Vytal festival since Vacuo was hosting it and get your autograph.

"He wanted to be a Huntsmen, I told him that he needed to eat his vegetables and do his homework to get into Shelter primary combat school. Never seen him eat broccoli so fast." He laughed at the memory as a smile grew on his face. Ruby found herself smiling with him, imagining a small child devouring a plate of food just because someone wanted to a Huntsmen. The idea of someone looking up to her was a shock. Sure, she had pictures of famous Huntsmen and Huntresses in her room and books, but she never thought anyone would look to her like that.

"He sounds nice, is he somewhere in the city?" She asked lightly. His smile dropped and sorrow filled his eyes, and she knew his answer before he spoke it.

"No," He said quietly. "A Paladin walked through our house during the First Assault. He died that day." The whole tent was silent, while only a few of her squad were in there with them, they had stopped talking and doing things to listen to them. The silence lingered for a while, Ruby broke it with a quiet apology to a child she never knew. She knew that so many people died in Vacuo during the First Assault from Atlas. They attacked with such little warning that the people of Vacuo could not evacuate civilians before the bombs hit.

The silence was broken by a wailing alarm, causing everyone to stop and swing their heads at the source of the frightening noise. A second passed and a voice came over the speaker system that was rigged up. "All personal to your muster points! Squad leaders to command! Prepare for battle!" The alarm and message repeated again as everyone rushed out of their seats and pulled their armour on and picked up their rifles. Ruby jumped off the bed and put her weapon in the holster on her hip before rushing to command in a flurry of petals.

When she got there, everyone there was rushing back and forth, shouting numbers at each other as the other squad leaders made their way to the commanding officer's office. Inside, the Major was standing in front of a map of the area shaking his head. Once everyone was accounted for, he spoke quickly. "Our scouts have picked up a large Atlas attack force coming for us. While their numbers aren't as big as the First Assault, it is more than enough to wipe us out. They will be here tomorrow."

There were a few pictures on the table and she could see a number of Paladin mech walkers supporting plenty of transport trucks that was most likely filled with Knight robots and Atlas soldiers. There was a stretch of silence between all of them, unsure what to do next. "What are we doing to evacuate the non-combatants?" Ruby asked after a few moments. Everyone looked over at her when she spoke, breaking the spell.

"There's not a lot we can do," The major said. "We only had a few airships that can take people out of the city, we would need to do round trips which would take too long."

"What if we hold them here?" Ruby asked as she pointed at a part of the city near the edge of the
city limits. "If we hold the line here, it'll give the ships enough time to make as many trips they need. Plus, with our anti-air guns, they won't be able to do anything to stop them" The major looked over the map and stroked his unshaven face.

"And who volunteers to hold the line?" He asked looked at each of them. Without a second hesitation, Ruby put her hand up.

As the day turned into night, the limited amount of airships they had were already shipping people to an area far outside the combat zone. The plan was to ferry the people out of the city and drop them off there, once the city was empty, they would start to bring them to the last city in Vale that has not fallen yet. It acted as the headquarters of the Reclamation army and the last safe place in Vale. Then, on the return trip, they are going to bring enough ships from the city to get everyone else in one last go.

Ruby managed to convince Nora to go with the first wave of people so she could help secure the area and protect the vulnerable civilians from Grimm, so many displaced people in one place are bound to attract Grimm. With that done, Ruby went to get her things ready for the attack tomorrow. It was going to be her squad and one other to hold the line while the rest had checkpoints to fall back to in waiting for the last airship to come. With everyone getting into positions, she got Pixie to help her get her crate out of the munitions storage before it was loaded up and shipped back.

It was another bit of Atlas Tech she managed to steal in Vale, she liked it because it had a lock on it that no one could get into. All over it was her rose symbol spray painted over the Atlas's military logo, her name stencilled in on the top with the high-tech lock engaged on the front. Reaching into her pocket, Ruby pulled out her scroll with the unlocking program app saved inside of it. When it finished, she was about to open the app when she saw a picture she had not seen in a long time. Framed vertically to fit on screen was the picture that team RWBY took when they first formed. Everyone looked so young and happy then, Weiss standing next to her with a smile, Yang standing between Blake and Weiss with a massive grin on her face. Even Blake looked happy to be included, Ruby studied the picture for a few moments before swiping to the right, bringing with it a different picture she saved as a background. This one was Yang standing in front of their house, flexing her arms with a wink and a grin.

She swiped right again, bringing up the next picture with a series of different apps that she used back in school. This once was Blake reading on her bed, her face was red and her eyes were wide. She was busy trying to hide the fact that she was caught reading one of her Ninjas of Love books. Despite the fact that she was embarrassed, they all laughed about it afterwards when they got dinner that day. A light smile touched Ruby's lips as she remembered that day. Her smile disappeared and her thumb began to shake, she knew what the next picture was.

Swiping one last time, she found the app that opened her chest, but the picture it was on was hard for her. It was of Weiss and her. Weiss was looking to her right with an annoyed look on her face where Ruby's face was squished next to her cheek. Ruby was smiling with her other arm wrapped around the Heiress's shoulder so she could pull her closer. Weiss was so mad at her for invading her personal space and lectured her for an hour about it, but it was one of her favourite photos of Weiss, she even sent her the picture when she calmed down enough.

"Enemy..." The Red Death whispered in her mind. She cleared her head with a shake and thumbed the app she needed. Loading the program, she pressed her cracked scroll to the lock and it unlocked a second later. Turning the device off to save power, she pocketed the device and opened the crate to get what she needed.
Inside was a mess. Digging through to get a small case with the Atlas Military mark on it, she opened it up and took one full vial of Aura Stimulant from it and pocketed it. She had another four full vials remaining that would last her a long time. Next was a bunch of half started letters she had tried beforehand. Each of them was addressed to her sister, but she never got any further than a paragraph in, and each letter grew less and less personal and had few and few words before she gave up altogether. Putting those to the side, she lifted a large box out of the crate and nodded. This is what she needed.

Opening it, she pulled some kind of machine out of the box and attached it to her back. "Holy shit, what is that thing?" Pixie asked as she looked at it.

"An attachment for my Crescent Rose, it'll help." She said simply as she handed the pink haired woman a large box of custom ammunition for it. "It's a Rail-mounted Penetrating Rending cannon. Or RPR (Reaper) Cannon for short"

"Bad ass..."

The night turned to morning, and Ruby stood on the roof of a large building. A few kilometres away she could see a large dust cloud being kicked up from the approaching army. They needed to keep them busy for just a little longer so the last of the ships could leave. Pulling out her weapon, she brought it into its sniper form and pulled the contraption off her back. Lining it up on top of her weapon, she pulled a large lever and locked it into place. Swinging it around, it unfolded fully with the attachment and became whole.

The RPR cannon attachment modified Crescent Rose to fire anti-tank rounds in addition to the normal sniper rounds she used. A massive barrel sitting on top with an extra powerful scope to see further. The extra power from the anti-tank rounds needed a better platform to fire from, so she extended the size of her scythe blade to be three times the mass as before. The only downside was that it was much too heavy in this form, she had to use her Aura enhanced strength to move it around and use the normal rounds just to shift it lightly.

The massive scythe blade was hanging off the side of the building to stabilise her aim. Crouching, she pulled back the massive chamber to load up the anti-tank round that Pixie handed to her and it slid into place. Closing the chamber, she pressed her shoulder into the stock and looked down the scope of the RPR cannon. She could see ten Paladins coming towards them with rest of the convoy, and they were the reason she broke out the cannon. Dialling in the scope, she hovered over one of the mech walkers when something familiar caught her eye.

Standing on the shoulder of a mech, the familiar sight of platinum white hair flew in the wind. Weiss Schnee was talking to someone who had their cockpit open. From the distance, she could not make out her features or anything, but she knew that hair and form. She stared at her through the scope for a few seconds, her squad waiting for the signal to attack. She just watched the form of her former partner as the army grew closer and closer.

"Enemy... Weiss is part of Atlas, Atlas killed so many in the First Assault. Midori's son died because of them..."

The Red Death was right. Atlas killed countless people during the assault, and they would kill so much more if Ruby allowed them to enter the city so soon. She took a deep breath and cleared her mind, her finger resting on the trigger. When she opened them, she adjusted her stance slightly, shifting the crosshairs of her scope so that it hovered over Weiss. "Fire in the hole," Ruby said, her eyes never leaving her target.

"FIRE IN THE HOLE!" Pixie shouted as everyone crouched down and held their hands over their
ears. She tensed her body, channelling her Aura to compensate for the massive recoil that was about to push her body and weapon. Exhaling her breath, she held it and waited for a moment before she pulled the trigger.

Chapter End Notes

And another chapter down.

I hope this chapter wasn't too confusing, I know there was a lot to go through on this one but I hope you enjoyed it anyways.

So, I've almost been posted stories on this site for nearly a whole year now, it's crazy how time passes and how many chapters I've put out since my very first story. (Dreams of Tomorrow)

It's really interesting to see how much I've grown as a writer and I can't wait to get better and put out more stories.

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo! It's my dream to get onto page 1 for Kudos by the end of the story. If you've already left a Kudo, leave a comment. Tell me what you like, what you don't like, what I should add or take out. I don't care what it is, I just love reading them.

If you'd like to have a chat, you can find me on FF.net (This is posted there under the same name) Or on Tumblr (Angryfacewritings) I'd love to talk to you about the story, or RWBY or just shit in general.

And as always, thank you for taking the time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness.
The Beast In The Beauty Pt: III

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Beast in the Beauty

Pt III

After the excitement of the first day, the rest of the trip to Mistral was fairly boring. With four of the crewmen dead and a dozen injured, Blake did what she could to help out around the ship. She learned about the people she worked with a little bit, almost all of them were okay with her being a faunus. A lot of them even helped with hiding some faunus and gave what they could so those who were too scared of being attacked could make the exodus to Menagerie or another community where they could defend against those who wanted to hurt them.

The first mate, Matte Skye, was not necessarily racist, just upset over the attack and the death of her friends. Understandable. With everything that has happened because of the White Fang attack on Beacon and it's hand in causing the Fall of Vale, she would be weary as well. With a final push of a large wrench, Blake secured the oversized bolt that was part of a machine that made sure the power stayed on. She did not understand almost everything that she was doing on this ship, she just did what they asked her to do.

"Thanks for the help, Ms Black. It's kinda hard without Aura to get that bolt on tight enough." The crewmen said as he checked the machine she was working on. "You can take a break if you want. I think we can manage now." With a grateful nod, Blake pulled her jacket back over her shoulder and walked through the internals of the ship until she arrived on the deck. The sun was shining and she could see the continent of Anima on the horizon, and with it, the city of Mistral.

If Raven was right, Yang is somewhere inside the city. With that thought, a fresh wave of unease rushed through her. She had no idea how she was going to say to her, should she start by saying hi? Maybe falling to her knees and begging for forgiveness? Presenting the arm to her in the hopes that would still her wraith? She expected Yang to try and beat her to death, and to be completely honest, she deserved it. The years of tracking Adam down had taken a toll on her, every time she came up to a dead end, she wanted to go back to Yang and accept her punishment.

Blake had been so deep in her own thoughts that she did not notice captain Bronze approaching her until he was standing next to her, looking out over the water. "We will be arriving at the port by the evening. I must thank you for all of your hard work helping around the ship these last few days, thank you, Ms Black." He said as the two of them stared out over the rolling waves of the ocean.

"Well, you're getting me to where I need to go free of charge, it's the least I can do," Blake said lightly as she watched as a flock of seagulls began to fly around the ship, their cries for food filling the silence between them.

"I wonder, Ms Black," He began. "If you could be anywhere in the world right now, would it be a where, or to a who."

Blake sighed and continued to stare out over the open waters. "I was in Vale during the Fall, someone I cared about got badly hurt trying to protect me. After that, I ran. I tried to track down the person who hurt her but it cost me so much by the end of it and I realised that I was wrong..."
"Does it have something to do with that case you seem over protective about?"

"Yes, I just hope it's enough for forgiveness."

"Are they worth all the pain you've gone through to get it?" He asked gently.

"All of it and so much more." He told him as she gripped the railing in front of her. The older man simply nodded and resumed looking outwards, they were silent for a few more moments before he turned to face her.

"I hope you find forgiveness in your actions, Ms Black." The captain said as he tipped his hat to her and began to walk away.

"Me too..."

As they got closer to land, more and more Mistrali battleships came into view, forming a defensive parameter around the closest port to Mistral. The war forcing sides to create weapons of war to protect their people. From what she could see, each ship was equipped with anti-air cannons and ship to ship armaments. While Atlas had superior weapons and a larger fleet, they would be hard pressed to turn this port into a beachhead considering that it would be easier to establish a forward base using the northern tundra of Anima rather than come completely around to here.

The evening came and coated the world in an amber glow as they pulled into the port. Blake watched as the crates of Atlas Dust that were smuggled across the ocean were wheeled off the Shaded Galley, the Atlas and SDC logos were painted over to show the Mistral symbol so that she could use it. Blake did not know how much money they were getting for this deal, nor did she care much, she was glad she got to Anima in one piece, now she just needed to get to the capital now.

With the case in her hand and a bow covering her ears again, she walked off the passenger ramp and onto solid ground again. Silently thankful to be off the enclosed boat, she began to walk away from the water and into the city actual. The familiarity of being in an actual town or city was comforting for her. She passed by several people who were living their lives without being under the threat of an attack anytime soon. Her stride only paused when she came up onto a notice board with an aged poster that was titled "Mistral's most wanted"

While most of the people she had never seen or even heard of before, there were a few that stood out. The first was Roman Torchwick, his picture was a mug shot of a bruised and beat up looking man. Even with a black eye and bleeding from a cut on his cheek, he never lost his smirk or the air of intimidation he had about him. The next one was of his known accomplice, a smaller woman with brown and pink hair with white streaks in it.

While she was unnamed in the poster and the only photo was of her through a security screen standing next to Roman, Blake recognised her as the petite woman who had saved him from the beat down they were going to give him under the freeway and when Yang fought her on the train. Her charges were the same as his: murder, assault with a deadly weapon, blackmail, extortion, evading authorities, drug and weapon trafficking were the worse on the poster, but the last person on the poster surprised her.

The face of Raven, Yang's birth mother, was plastered at the top of the poster and had the largest picture of all them. Below her picture was her full name, Raven Branwen, and under it was a title. "The Demon Queen of the Badlands" According to the poster, she was the leader of a band of bandits that have been raiding a series of towns and villages across the badlands for a number of years. Resulting in the deaths of several hundred people. While it was true that there were plenty of
unlawful people in Mistral, Raven being the leader of the largest group of them came to a surprise for Blake.

A cry from a bird took her attention away from the notice board, looking up at the top of a building, a raven with red eyes stretched its wings out and squawked at her once more and flew away. Narrowing her eyes at the direction that the bird went down. Walking towards the edge of the small town, she came to a small clearing that had a moving truck parked in it. She recognised a few of the crates of Dust were being loaded into the back as part of the batch that she helped bring over from Atlas.

From the opening in the back, Raven jumped to the ground and looked over at Blake and nodded lightly. The last crate was loaded up by so villagers who were paid by Yang's mother, Blake saw that the Lien cards she paid them with had a very high denomination value on them. When they left, Raven tossed a set of keys at her before getting into the passenger seat of the vehicle, leaving Blake to drive. Walking over to her door, she opened it and handed Yang's arm to the older woman before getting in and starting the truck.

Following the dirt road and wooden signs that dotted the paths, Blake and Raven were silent for the most part. Between them sat the case with the cybernetic arm, and at Raven's feet was her weapon. About an hour into the trip, Blake finally broke the uncomfortable silence. "So, the Demon Queen of the Badlands?" She said with a raised eyebrow. From the corner of her eye, she saw her sigh and close her eyes in annoyance. Obviously, she did not like to talk about it that much.

"Not the worst title I have been given..." She said finally.

"Oh? And what is the worst?"

"Maiden..." Raven mumbled out.

Blake shot her a confused glance before she continued. "My brother has called me a bitch on more than once occasion. You met him already, he's the drunk guy you met back in Vacuo..." Blake recalled the man in question, the man with the flask that wanted to know how Ruby was doing. Thinking of the young team leader brought a fresh wave of sorrow, her last words from Ruby was a threat, and judging by what she did to Weiss, not one to be taken lightly.

Stopping the moving truck when a shepherd decided that now was the best time to move his herd of bovines, Blake sighed and ran a hand through her hair. "Can't you just portal us to Mistral?" Blake asked her. The woman shook her head simply as she placed a protective hand over her weapon set.

"I can't use Muninn's Cut like that." She began. "First, I can only take myself and one other person. Not a truck and a few crates of Dust with me. Secondly, this is much more discreet." Blake took another look at Raven's rotating blade sheath, Muninn's Cut, and wondered just how much power she wields.

As the night crawled across the sky, Blake was thankful once again for her faunus traits, she was able to navigate the rough roads with ease. The only illumination coming into the cab of the truck was from the shattered moon and a broken green LED clock on a silent radio. It was more than enough for her to see Raven out of the corner of her eye every few minutes, to see what she was doing. So far, she was doing nothing but staring out the window. "So how does the Demon Queen get stuck with smuggling Dust into Mistral?" Blake asked finally.

Raven was silent for a few moments before speaking. "I'm not the queen of anything anymore."
Your friend saw to that..." She said simply. When Blake gave her a confused look, she continued. "After Atlas's Second Assault failed, the Council of Mistral thought it would be a good idea to use this newly formed army to secure the borders of the kingdom. So three hundred of Mistral's strongest soldiers marched into the Badlands and laid waste to everything after giving a single warning to surrender.

"I wasn't there when they attacked my tribe, but I saw the aftermath. The only ones who survived were the ones who weren't in the village when they attacked. They gave them hell though. But that's when I saw your friend, I think his name was Jaune?" This caught Blake's attention, she did her best to pay more attention to her while not driving off the road while listening. "Of all the soldiers there, he had the most blood on him. Whatever training they had given him turned him into one of the greatest warriors I had ever seen. It's a shame we couldn't get him onto our side."

"And which side is ours?" Blake asked.

"The side that's keeping this world from tearing itself apart."

Silence overcame them once again as Blake reflected on what she said. She could not see Jaune Arc, of all people, becoming the strongest warrior in this war. Sure, he had a lot of Aura, more than most if their Aura lessons taught them, and sure, Pyrrha had been teaching him on the roof of the school during the night. Blake had seen them a few times while she was out stretching her ears out of the public eye. But for him to become like that, something must have seriously gone wrong.

Eventually, they arrived inside the Kingdom limits and Raven had directed her to a seemingly abandoned factory just on the outside of the city. Turning the car off just outside of the warehouse entrance, Blake followed Raven to the side entrance where she slipped her ornate Grimm mask over her face and slammed her fist against the door twice before taking a step back. The eye slit opened up and a pair of eyes looked at the masked woman and to Blake for a second before closing the eye slit and the door opened up a second later.

Following Raven into the building, she took a quick look back at the guard who was staying at the door. He had a dark complexion and dark hair. He had an assault rifle on his back as he went to sit back down in a chair next to the door. She began to get a bad feeling about what she was getting into when she saw a set of scales running up the length of his neck and the sides of his face, disappearing under his hairline.

Looking back to where she was walking, Raven lead her through a set of steel double doors into the massive warehouse storage area and Blake's blood went cold. Hanging far above them, secured to the rafters was a black flag with the crimson logo of the White Fang on it. All around the area was dozens of White Fang members doing tasks, looking over maps, loading up weapon magazines and sharpening blades. A few were resting in bunks nearby while others were eating at a small kitchen area. Boxes of stolen goods lined each of the walls.

Wide-eyed, Blake looked back to Raven, she was just about to reach for her weapon when her armoured arm snapped out and held her wrist at bay. "What are we doing here!" Blake whispered harshly to the older woman. The mask simply turned to face her as she leaned in to speak quietly to the faunus woman.

"This is where we start to fight back."

"Really? cause this looks a lot like a White Fang base of operations!"

"That's because it's supposed to." A third voice stopped any rebuttal that Raven had prepared for her. Looking over, Blake saw someone she knew walking towards them. She had long, thigh-high
boots that had stylised gold trim on the tops as well as her toes and heels with brown pants and a gold belt that hung off her hips. A tight black shirt covered her midriff and a brown jacket covered her arms, on her wrists and shoulders were more of the gold plating for protection.

Over her chest was a black combat vest with pockets and pouches for ammunition, two Dust grenades dangled off one side while the other side had a pistol in a holster as well as a combat knife just above it. Long, brown hair flowed down her back and ended at her hips. A matching pair of rabbit ears sat on top of her head, except half of one was missing and the other had a large chunk missing near the top of it. Across her face, she had three scars that ran down from her right eye, over her nose to her left cheek and marring the corner of her mouth as well.

Velvet Scarlatina stood before her, more confident and determined than she had ever seen her before. "It's nice to see you again, Blake." She said, her voice thick with her accent. A smile tugging at her lips lightly as she looked at Raven for a moment. "Did you get it?" She asked. Raven answered her by tossing her the keys to the truck.

"Four crates of Dust, I also got the last assignment before our contacts went dark so you're not getting any more support from them for a while," Raven said from behind her mask. Velvet simply nodded and handed the keys off to one of the White Fang members, who went out the door to bring in the Dust.

"Thank you, this will help the cause."

Blake shook her head as she looked between the two women. "Sorry, but what the hell is going on here? Since when did you start commanding a White Fang base, Velvet?" Blake demanded. A few of the members stood up from where they were working and reached for weapons, but the rabbit faunus simply waved them off before speaking.

"I know how it looks, Blake, but I promise it isn't. We look like the White Fang to infiltrate them, gain their trust. The White Fang has become a beast, feasting on the blood of the good and the innocent, We are the illness that is slowly killing it from the inside. The blackened tooth of the beast, we are the Black Fang, and we will kill this beast from within." Velvet said while extending her arms to everything around her. The Black Fang members began to assemble behind her and stood ready at her command. Determined faces on all of them.

Another thing she noticed was that not all of the Black Fang members were faunus, there were a number of humans in their ranks as well. While wearing the masks, they would be easy to glance over but if someone smelled them or saw they had no animal traits anywhere on them, they would be spotted right away. "But why, how did you do this, Velvet?" Blake asked as she looked back at the brown eyed woman.

"It was easy, really..." She said with a shrug. "The White Fang had killed and alienated just as many faunus as humans during the war, all they needed was a spark, all I needed was a spark..." from behind her, a man walked up to her and placed a hand on her shoulder. Tall, bald with a pale complexion, he had a vest similar to hers and a grey shemagh scarf wrapped around his neck. She smiled back at him and took a deep breath before continuing.

"We're all here to bring down the White Fang, but I also learned something after a few of their members switched sides. They were receiving intel from both the Atlesians and the Mistrali about troop movements and supply drops, making sure they could always strike at the right time to get the most they could before retreating, making them stronger by the day."

Blake shook her head. "Why would both sides be giving them information like that, it makes no sense..."
"It does if someone is controlling both sides, ensuring that this war continues" Raven spoke up.

Velvet nodded quickly. "That's not even the worst part," She began. "We found proof that both sides had sent calls for cease-fires and negotiations years ago, but something always happened to them or simply been ignored. Innocent people are dying because of them, and I need your help, Blake. With the information Raven has given us, we'll be able to find out who is feeding the White Fang information on the Mistrali side, without it, they'll be weaker, vulnerable. We'll be able to draw Adam out, and end the White Fang once and for all"

The thought of ending Adam made the scar on her side itch lightly. That very idea had kept her up at night, planning and thinking and trying to end his life, he was the reason her's was so fucked up right now. She looked back at the assembled force behind Velvet, how ironic that the original dream for the White Fang, that humans and faunus could be equal, only became a reality to take down the organisation that dreamt it. Human and faunus were willing to lay their lives down for each other, something that should have been so effortless before now.

She looked back at Velvet, the once quiet girl was gone. A visionary and a guerrilla leader stood in her place. Reaching up, Blake pulled the ribbon from her faunus ears and let it fall to the floor. While Adam is alive, Yang would never be safe. If Velvet had this force under her command, she must have a doctor or at least know someone who could attach Yang's arm for her. Her ears stretched lightly, free from their prison, and nodded to Velvet.

"Welcome to the Black Fang, Blake."

Chapter End Notes

God damn, this took a long time. One sitting since I wanted to get this to you guys over the weekend.

For those who get email notifications whenever I update, I'm sorry if I woke you guys up.

I hope you enjoyed like I say over and over again, Blake and Weiss are always harder for me.

And with that, Velvet Scarlatina has entered this war! I hope you liked the way I wrote her in, she doesn't have much screen time and I hope I wrote her okay.

So I also went out on a bit of a limb and named Raven's weapon. Muninn's Cut. Since the twins might be based on the Norse myth of Hugin and Muninn, I thought it was fitting. For those who are wondering, I also decided to name Qrow's weapon Hugin's Noose. I based the names of their weapons on the other poem about the Norse Ravens.

*Two ravens flew from Hnikar’s [Óðinn’s] shoulders; Huginn to the hanged and Muninn to the slain*
I hope that makes sense.

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo! Much love if you do. If you already left a Kudo, leave a comment! I love reading and talking to people about my stories or just RWBY in general. I also post on FF.Net under the username AngeristFace, (Same story title) And I have a Tumblr! (Not that I use it much since I don't know how to Tumblr) @AngryFaceWritings. Come say hi, or whatever.

And as always, thank you for taking the time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness!
The Kindling Dragon Pt: III

Chapter Notes

Another sex scene. Reader discretion is advised

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Kindling Dragon

Pt: III

The smell of the ocean filled Port of Arrow, the largest city on the eastern coast of the Kingdom of Vale, as the trio of women walked into its borders. The city was surprisingly bustling, being so close to Mistral's borders was a great deterrent from Atlas's war machines, meaning these people could live their lives as far away from the war as possible. Most of the battles and skirmishes were taking place in Mistral's northern territories, Vale's western borders and most of the Vacuo provinces still in conflict, meaning this was one of the safest places to be on Sanus.

Over the water, the three of them saw the coming storm in the distance, inciting a heavy sigh from Emerald who led the group. "Great. First, it was too hot, now it's going to be wet. Just great..." She groaned as they walked down the small hill that overlooked the city, exiting the lush forests of Vale. Behind her, Yang smiled lightly as she took a deep breath and could smell the mixture of coming storm and soothing sea, it reminded her of her home, with the promise of coming back.

"Well," She began. "That's the weather for you. Weather you like it or not." The mint haired girl stopped and looked over at Yang with an unblinking stare, Yang returned it with a one of her old toothy smirk and a single finger gun. For the last few days since they left Grey Rock, the blonde had been feeling much more like her old self, smiling more and cracking off puns here and there. She felt better since having closure about her father and having an actual goal to work towards helped.

Unfortunately for Emerald, this meant that she had to put up with Yang's old self. Yang gave her a wink and the woman sighed while shaking her head. "I don't know what's worse, your bitchy sober side or this bull shit." She pinched the bridge of her nose and hung her head lightly.

"Well, you're about to find out if you don't refill my flask," Yang added with a cheeky smirk as she shook the empty metal container in front of her.

"We're just about in the city, just hold on until we get onto the ship, you've almost gone through the bottle already." She said as she pulled the pack onto her back and continued down the path towards one of the city entrances. Yang simply blew a strand of hair that fell into her face and followed her as she picked up the large bag filled with their money. Close behind her, Neo walked closely, a small smile on her face as she stayed next to the woman of her affection. Yang felt her smaller fingers slip into one of the belt loops on her jeans and could not help but to smile at the feeling.

She had relationships before, it was her time in Signal primary when she learned that she leant towards the fairer sex in terms of romance. She was not really looking for a relationship back in
Beacon and simply ignored anyone who did not give her booze or food after it's Fall. Now, she had travelled across Vale with her girlfriend. It still felt off to her to call Neo that, given what their history was together, but she was happy with how things turned out. She turned to look at Neo, only for her not to be there.

Instead, a woman with black pigtails, a sleeveless black vest and matching skirt were holding onto her belt loop affectionately. Yang recognised the woman before her as one of Cinder's teammates during the Vytal tournament. "Huh. Guess you were there the whole time." Neo just looked up at her with her green eyes and gave her a wink, her eye shifting to the pink one before looking forward again. Through her scroll, Neo explained that someone would try to arrest her if she walked around using her usual mask. Yang began to wonder how many "Masks" she had.

Deciding to drop the thought before she began to try and figure out if her usual pink, brown, and white outfit were the actual person or just another mask.

When they entered the city proper, the first thing they saw was a massive statue depicting a group of a dozen soldiers in old armour and weapons. One in front was crouched down with a bow in her hand and was facing towards the water. Below it on a plaque, rusted bright blue from the sea water, Yang read its words. "We know not who fired first, but we all knew who lost by the end." Seeing the statue and it's words, she remembered something about a lesson back at Beacon.

It seemed so long ago that she was sitting in a class, watching her professor that was more coffee than human, zip back and forth across his classroom while spewing words out faster than most people could register. If she remembered correctly, the Port of Arrow was the site of the first official battle of the First Great War between Mistral and Vale. History had forgotten who fired the first arrow at the other's army because, at the end of the battle, the Grimm had taken whoever survived.

After the war, both Vale and Mistral worked together to rebuild the small port town and it had expanded since then. Becoming one of five main cities in Vale as well as gaining a primary Combat school, Torch. Yang saw the school as they walked down the main street towards the port, in the courtyard were young teens that were training to become the next generation of Huntsmen and Huntresses. Yang slowed to a stop and watched as one boy was using his fists to punch a training dummy into the ground. Staring at the boy, Yang became lost in a memory as she stared through the bars of the gate.

Yang walked past the gates of Signal Primary and smiled. She was now a third-year student which meant two more years before she could attend Beacon academy in the capital. Looking over, she saw her friends were all hanging around their usual spot under the tree in the front yard. Normally, she would walk over to them and join in whatever they were talking about, but for now, she had an important job to do. Looking behind her, she could not help but smile at the sight of her younger sister standing at the gates of the school.

Bright, silver eyes stared up at the large building with wonder, amazed at the contents of a simple building could train heroes like the one she read about. "You ready, Rubes?" The blonde asked with a smirk. Ruby's earlier wonder was quickly replaced by the nervousness she had while they were walking up to the front gates. She quickly wrapped the red cloak around her body and tried to hide from the people around them.

"I don't know Yang..." She mumbled out. "What if I don't belong? What if I'm not good enough. I could always go back to the regular school and become something else..."

Yang walked up to her and crouched down to her level before grasping her shoulders with both her hands. "Ruby, listen to me." She waited for her younger sister to look her in the eyes before
"All you ever wanted since you could walk was to be a Huntress, don't get cold feet now just 'cause you're a little nervous. All you have to do is go to your classes and learn all you can just like at elementary, right? Did you know I was really nervous when I first came here?"

Ruby looked up at her with wide eyes of surprise. "Really?" She smiled and nodded.

"Yup, but all the teachers here are really cool, plus me, dad, uncle Qrow are here to help out as well, okay?" Ruby nodded and smiled before releasing her cloak and followed her sister into the building. When the school day was done, Ruby met Yang out front and assaulted her with about five different weapon designs for weapons she would build in her first months. Yang could not remember the last time her little sister smiled so much, not since Summer died.

Yang was brought out of her memory when she felt someone pull her arm lightly. Looking down, she saw Neo looking at her with a worried expression on her face, Yang smiled and shook her head lightly, clearing the last images of her life from then. "I'm okay," She said with a soft smile. Neo held the worried expression and pouted lightly, not buying it. With a deep breath, they left the school fence and continued down towards the docks, where their ship was waiting for them.

Stocking up on a few last minute supplies before boarding, they got specialised Dust ammunition for Yang and Emerald's weapons, a few packs of travel rations and a bottle of whisky for her flask. Sitting in the middle of the port side marketplace, was a similar statue to the one they walked past when they first entered. Instead of old Valenese armoured people, there were Mistrali people with their weapons drawn and a bow pointed into the city. Below it, the same message was written on a metal place, this one had more rust than the other.

Walking up to the smaller ship that was called The Golden Goose. From the look of it, it looked like a fishing vessel, but since it was being run by the Xong crime family, it was probably being used to smuggle things to and from Mistral. Walking up to a woman with long black hair done up in a traditional Mistrali bun behind her head. She raised her eyebrow at them, a cigarette between her index and thumb trailing smoke through the air as she blew grey through her nose.

Emerald simply produced the envelope for the woman, who took it and quickly skimmed through its contents before nodded. Standing up, she took one last drag of the smoke and tossed it into the water and guided them onto the ship that would take them to Mistral. Once on board, they let loose the ropes that kept them from floating away and set sail eastward. Inside was larger than it seemed from the outside, lots of room for smuggling as well as cargo holds and tools for legitimate fishing.

A single, tiny bedroom with two bunks would serve the three of them while the captain had her own room closer to the bow of the ship. A kitchen the size of a closet and a bathroom that was pretty much a toilet and a door made up the rest of the ship. Tossing the bags in the room, Neo turned back into her usual pink, brown and white scheme and looked over at Yang. Giving her a wink, her pink eye shifted sides as she smirked lightly.

An hour later, Yang had the smaller woman pinned to the lower bunk with her hand and lips. Emerald had seen this coming and left them alone, she told them to let her know when they were done since she did not want to walk in on them again. More than once, during their travels, had she come back from gathering firewood or been woken up by the sounds of their lovemaking. Neo often slipped into Yang's sleeping bag or Yang would pull her deeper into the woods and hid behind a tree.

Yang's coat and boots had already been discarded hastily and simply laid on the ground in a heap next to Neo's, she had both of the smaller woman's wrists in her hand and her knee between her thighs, keeping her from falling on top of her as she attacked Neo's mouth with her own. She could feel Neo bucking her hips against her knee as she playfully struggled against her grip. She felt her
teeth bit her lip and yang pulled her bottom lip out of her mouth before looking down at her. She leant in close, pressing her forehead against hers, staying just outside of Neo's kissing range.

"You're not her..." Yang whispered to her. She always did this before the act, a reminder that the woman below her was not Blake. She was better than Blake, she actually returned feelings and affection. She was here and Blake was not, Neo was the one under her grasp and not Blake. Neo was the one who made her feel better, who wanted her, who wanted to be with her. Not Blake. Neo filled the emptiness inside of her heart and soul every time they did this and she felt full of warmth.

Even if it was only for a few hours at a time.

Neo stared into her eyes and tilted her head enough to capture her lips once again, only this time was much softer than the hungry kisses they shared before. It was her answer to Yang's statement. 

*I know.*

Yang melted into the kiss and released the smaller woman's hands so she could hold herself up a little better, pressing her body against hers. Neo's fingers travelled around her neck and into the thick golden curls of her hair. Nails scratching at her scalp before pulling away, letting her hair slip between her small fingers. Hands began to trail and pull at clothing, removing it from bodies and adding to the growing pile that was on the floor. Yang felt her nails digging into her back as her breasts pressed against the women below her, the subtle hints of strawberries, chocolate and vanilla filling her nose.

The blonde's breath hitched when she felt a knee slip between her thighs and press against her sex, heat pooling in her abdomen as her hips began to grind against her skin. Friction against the woman's silky smooth skin, stoking the flames of lust hotter as her moved her hips faster against her. She felt Neo's tongue slip into her mouth and she dove deeper into the kiss. Leaning on her stump, she dragged her fingers down her body, leaving angry red lines between her breasts and down her hips before finding what she was looking for.

A silent gasp came from her mouth as she arched her back, pushing her chest out and against hers. Yang continued to grind against her leg with the same timing of her fingers moving in and out of her. Neo had an expression of pure bliss as she bit down on her own lip, stopping her from biting down on Yang. Her eyes screwed shut tightly as both of them began to breathe heavily, she could feel Neo's hot breaths on her skin as she began to squirm under her.

One of Neo's hands came down to fondle her own breast while the other went into her own mouth to bite down on her fingers while her climax was coming closer and closer. Yang could feel her the pressure building inside of her as she moved her hips faster, her own moans filling the small room as they locked eyes once more. Yang dove into the kiss and reached her fingers into the spot she found that drove the smaller woman crazy.

As one, they came undone. Yang let out a deep groan as her body tensed up and continued to move against her leg, riding out her orgasm as Neo dug her nails into Yang's biceps as breathy moans left her mouth. When it was over, the strength that held up Yang's body failed her and she fell to the side of her, Neo was quick to wrap her arms around her and held her close, cuddling as they bathed in the afterglow of their lovemaking. Their legs entwined as Neo nuzzled into her bust, strawberry and chocolate hair covering her face.

She gently pushed some of the hair out of her face and smiled at her, she could feel her breaths on her chest as Neo gently traced the outline of the dragon tattooed on her chest. With her Aura, the tattoo had healed within two days fully heal with only a little bit of itch. The feeling of her
fingertips made cast goosebumps across her chest as they relaxed in each other's arms. Her breathing evened out and she watched as white and pink eyes slowly closed and she fell asleep gently against her chest.

She watched the smaller woman sleep soundlessly for a few minutes before she gently slipped out from under her and began to get dressed slowly. Two finger snaps caught her attention and she looked back to see Neo looking at her with tired eyes. "I'm just going out for some fresh air," Yang told her as she pulled her orange tank top on and walked back to the bunk. She could see the worry in her eyes as she tilted her head lightly. She simply smiled lightly and kissed her head. "I'm fine, promise. I'll be back in a few minutes, 'kay?"

She felt her hand on her cheek and gave her a simple kiss before she laid back down and pulled the pillow to her chest. Clinging to it, Neo closed her eyes again and took a deep breath as Yang slipped her boots on and walked out of the room. She navigated the small hallways and made her way to the deck, where she was assaulted by cool air and the smell of the sea. She found a spot on the railing and leant against it, staring out to the open ocean, she watched the waves form and disappear when Emerald slipped up next to her and leant on the railing as well.

"You guys done fucking like rabbits?" She asked as she stared out to the open ocean as well. Yang just smiled lightly as she did not look at her.

"Yeah. Sorry about that."

Emerald just shrugged as she began to pick at her nails absentmindedly. "Whatever." They continued to stand in silence before Emerald broke it a few minutes later. "So, what was with you spacing out in front of that school all about earlier?" She asked, the lapping of waves filling the silence after the question. Yang sighed as she ran a hand through her hair and turned to look at the dark-skinned woman.

"Just remembered how much of a shitty sister I've been." Emerald nodded lightly as she turned around and put her back to the water, her hands on the railing. Her mint hair flowing past her as the ocean winds whipped past them.

"I never had a family..." She said simply. "Never really wanted one. Too many people that depend on you, just easier to go through life alone."

"Sounds lonely."

Emerald hummed lightly as another bout of awkward silence overcame them. With one last deep breath of the ocean air, Yang stood up and smiled lightly. "I should probably get back to Neo before she comes to look for me." Emerald nodded and watched her leave before calling out to her.

"Hey. Could I ask you a question?" She began.

"Well, there's one already, but I suppose you could ask a few more," Yang replied with a small smirk.

"Ass..." Emerald looked out over the water for a few moments before looking back at her with crimson eyes. "Do you believe in destiny?" She asked finally.

Yang was not expecting a question like that. She blinked a few times before she looked over the ocean, looking for an answer. "If you asked me that a few years ago, I'd probably say no." She looked down at her stump, she could feel that she was balling her hand, but knew it was not there anymore. "But now, it feels like I'm being pulled along by something. Like I'm walking towards a
destination that I always needed to go to, but never knew exactly where it was. So, I guess you could call be a believer."

She was not lying. She had been hurt, broken and torn down, but it seemed like it was all for a reason, that she was now being built up and becoming stronger somehow. Emerald seemed to be satisfied with the answer and turned to look back out over the water. When the brawler made it back to the bunk room, she stripped out of her clothing once more and settled next to Neo once again, replacing the old, flat pillow with her chest so Neo could sleep comfortably. She really liked to rest her chest on her natural assets.

She pulled the cheap blanket over their bodies and simply let the sway of the ocean soothe her as the sun began to set. She just hoped that wherever destiny was taking her, it would lead to a better place. One where she would never be alone again.

Chapter End Notes

I am so, so, so sorry for not updating last week. Been fighting with a bear of a writer's block and I really didn't want this chapter to be a boring filler one.

Like, I know what happens at part "A" and at part "B", it's just forming the bridge between them that gives me trouble, and this chapter was a bridge, so I just hope it wasn't boring for everyone.

I hope you guys don't mind me taking a few liberties with the Lore of RWBY. Like I said before, I'm trying to fold aspects from Vol.4 into my story piece by piece, so the WoR episode about the great war pretty much legitimised the Port of Arrow in my story, kinda...

So if you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo! I love seeing how many people like the story, it makes me feel warm inside. If you already left a Kudo, leave a comment! I love reading them and talking to you guys. It can be about anything! Seriously. If you see anything out of place or doesn't make sense, let me know and I'll fix it as soon as I can.

This story is also posted on FF.net under the same name so if you go there too, show your support there as well!

And as always, thank you for taking the time out of your busy days to read my little slice of madness.
Weiss wished she could say she hated it wholly, but she could feel it in her bones. The hot winds buffing her sun-kissed skin with coarse sand should have infuriated her, instead, it made her anxious. She could feel the electricity in the air as she walked down the ramp of the Bullhead, soldiers were running to and from tents, carrying supplies or weapons to either be sent with the Third assault on the remaining resistance in Vacuo or be shipped to Mistral to help with the Fourth assault.

Making her way back to her tent, she saw that a few of the other Specialist's tents had already been packed up and stowed away. Weiss wasted little time doing the same. The tent was collapsed and folded with precision back into the trunk it had come from. A few personal effects were tossed in as well as she used the wheels to drag it to where the others were. Once that was set, she made her way to the armoury to do last minute preparations before they marched out.

All around her, she watched as Atlas men and women were gearing up. All of them were wearing the full battle plate armour with helmets on individual tables, each table had a rife in some state of disassembly or being cleaned. A couple of people were loading up their own magazines of bullets, Weiss asked about that before and someone answered that those who did that were superstitious and felt that it was bad luck for someone else to load up a magazine. The specialist did not care so long as it did not interfere with operations.

Collecting an ammunitions box that was personalised for her from the quartermaster, she found an empty table near the back and set both the box and her multi-action Dust rapier, Myrtenaster, on top. She undid the clip of the box and pulled out a stained and torn cloth from the top and laid it on the table before placing her weapon on it and opening it and extracting the revolving chamber from it. took out each compartmentalised Dust vial from it and set it aside before cleaning out the residue and grime from the silvered weapon.

Once it was cleaned to her liking, she then took out larger bottles of different Dusts, a small funnel as well as a tiny weight scale and began the careful task of measuring out exact amounts to refill her vials as well as fill up reserves that she stored on a pouch attached to her belt. She was carefully measuring out some purple Dust when the whole table shook suddenly, causing her to stumble slightly and overfill the cartridge. Looking up, she narrowed her eyes at the smirking form of a soldier.

She was not one of the normal soldiers that made up the bulk of the regular army. The woman in front of her was wearing Deep black armour instead of the basic white, her pants and under armour were a deep grey with added armour pieces on her legs and calves for added protection. Across the chest, Weiss could make out a great many dents, and scratches that tore at the paint, exposing the dulled metal under it. The woman set the helmet on the table with just as many scars and scratches as her chest piece, revealing her face.

The first thing Weiss noticed about the woman was the large scar that ran across her face, from one
cheekbone to the other, arching across her nose. Curiously enough, the exact area where the helmet sat on one's face when wearing it. Next was her unorthodox haircut, the sides of her head were buzzed down as far as it could go while leaving the top long to be braided behind her head, save for two long bangs that would sit hang over her eyes. The woman moved her brown bangs out of her face, only for them to fall back into place as pale green eyes examined Weiss.

"Specialist Schnee." She said with a heavy, brogue accent.

"Chief petty officer Reseda," Weiss responded.

Weiss looked back to the table where she had haphazardly slapped her weapon down. Her assault rifle matching her armour colour and with just as many dents and scratches in its surface. With practised precision, she began to load up her own magazines for her rifle like everyone else in the room. "I figgered you'd still be in Atlas. What, with that nasty bleeder you had last I seen you." She said as she slipped bullets into place before banging it on the table, making sure each round was flush before setting it aside.

Weiss eyed the woman before dumping the whole container back and measuring out the correct amount this time. "I was," She began as she sprinkled just enough to make the digital counter move once more before pouring the Dust inside of a cartridge and setting it aside to start the next one. "Aura helps us heal faster than normal people, so a week was all I needed. Besides, General Ironwood asked me to personally lead the charge, since we're pulling out of Vacuo once they're dealt with."

"Oh yeah?" She asked with a small smile. "Hopefully it'll go better the last time." She smirked lightly as she looked at Weiss. Her eyes narrowed and she jutted her chin out in a point towards her. "Happened to your drops?" She asked. It took a moment for Weiss to realise what she was asking. She brought her long fingers up to her chest piece on her right shoulder and felt the armour for a moment before setting her hand down.

"Must have been repaired when they painted the medals on," Weiss said simply. Reseda was part of the Shocktroopers, a special operations detachment of the Atlas navy that only accepts the best of the best. Men and woman who outperform everyone around them and are crazy enough to join them. Considering that their main stratagem was to literally drop from an Airship that was flying just inside the range where Dust loses its power in the atmosphere and land behind enemy lines to outflank and seize critical objectives.

With each successful drop, each member of the team makes each other by scratching a tally mark on their armour. Weiss had dropped only twice in her career, once during training since it was mandatory and the second time was during the attack on Vacuo city. Earning her two tallies on her breastplate while Senior Chief Reseda had six. "Best replace 'em before the Chief sees them missin', he'll carve them himself if you don't." The trooper warned as the two of them continued to reload their respective weapons.

"I'll keep that in mind..." Weiss said simply as she continued to measure out the Dust for her weapon. After a few silent moments between them, Reseda spoke up once again.

"Seems a tad much to be sending out into the desert, what's the story?" She asked while looking around and seeing some people were having problems trying to find an empty spot at the tables. Weiss took notice of this as well and shook her head lightly.

"We'll need everyone to just survive if Ruby is still there..."

"Who?"
"The Red Death."

The woman with the long bangs stopped loading the magazine in her hand and looked up at her. "The Red Deaths here?" She asked simply. Weiss nodded simply while watching the woman. She watched the woman push her tongue against her cheek lightly while looking around the room. Searching for something as her hand came up and began to scratch at the scar that ran across her face. While Weiss had only met her after she had acquired the scar, she never knew how she got it, but she had a pretty good idea now.

"Scared, Chief Reseda?" Weiss asked, keeping a smirk at bay. The Trooper shot her a glare as she tore her hand away from her face and slammed her palm onto the table.

"Ammn'!" She defended herself. "We're 3-4-3 Droppers! We aren't scared of no one!." Weiss simply hummed a response as her Dust measurements were more important than her ego. Just as the dropper was about to tell some more, someone else clasped a hand on her shoulder. The man had a buzzed head and a heavy stubble on his chin. He was wearing the same black and grey shock trooper uniform as she was with just as many dents and scratches on his armour.

"Kelly, you done loading up?" He asked her. Without looking away from Weiss, she nodded.

"I am." She gathered up her magazines and shoved them into their pouches on her armour before turning and leaving in a hurry, brushing shoulders with some regular soldiers as she rushed. The man simply shrugged and looked back to Weiss and nodded his head respectfully before leaving with her. Across her back, Weiss saw three words etched into the back of her armour. "Drop. Shock. And Roll" Weiss let out a sigh as she put away another full cartridge and reached for another before she paused and looked at her hand. She stared at it for a few seconds just to make sure before sighing deeply. Not a single tremor in her fingers, solid as a stone. She knew her sister was right when she said that she would rather be fighting than having lunch with her but seeing the evidence right in front of her pained her heart. She could only hope the end of this war would bring an end to her suffering before something terrible happens. She had heard stories of people returning from service and having complete breakdowns with varying results.

Speeding through the rest of her cartridges, she packed everything up and made her way towards the muster point where the Third assault was going to start. She saw the company of men and woman standing at attention, weapons at the ready. Behind them, three platoons of Knight robots ready to be deployed with ten Paladin mech suits getting into position as well as four low-ranking Specialists. Once everyone was accounted for and enough supplies loaded up, everyone was loaded up into large troop trucks and they began their march towards Ritrr.

They drove through the night to limit the amount of time the Reclamation army had to prepare for their attack, resulting in people taking shifts to sleep as the drivers needed to rest before the large battle. Weiss tried to catch as much rest as she could before they stopped outside the city and everyone got ready with plans and strategies. Weiss was directing squads with objectives throughout the city, making sure that every outcome would end in their favour. They had been held up in this city for long enough to set up traps and ambushes.

Deciding that the best course of action was to split up the Assault into two flanking forces and the main column to take most of the aggro. The squad leaders had their orders and the Knights had been activated, there was nothing left but to launch the attack. At dawn, Weiss found her place on the shoulder of the lead Paladin as they moved into the city. The person who was piloting the mech was Lieutenant Colonel Argent, he might be a high ranking officer, but he was one of the best Paladin pilots in the kingdom.
"Are you ready, Specialist?" The man asked through the open window of the pilot's chair. Weiss simply nodded to the question, she could see the war-torn city in the distance as the sun slowly began to bring colour back to the world. "Well, if anyone can get us out of here, it's you." He said as he pushed a few buttons on his command console and adjusted the controls slightly. She could feel the rough winds push her white hair back behind her. She wondered if Ruby was still in there or did she die during some mission between the last attack and now.

"Mind if I ask you something, Specialist Schnee?" The officer asked. She mindlessly nodded as she continued to study the city, trying to find the best locations to avoid ambushes. "Do you believe in destiny?" He asked lightly. Weiss looked over at him and thought about the answer.

"I don't know," Weiss answered truthfully. "My father had a destiny for me when I was younger, but the older I got, the more and more I found that he was trying to control destiny rather than let it pass naturally. He tried to control my sister and she fled from him and into the military. He tried to control me and I became a Huntress, then he tried to control my brother and that was marginally more successful with that. But, when he tried to control destiny, it fought back, he died because he is ambitious, trying to control everything.

"We shouldn't even be here. The real enemy is out there and we're fighting each other..." Weiss mumbled the last part as she looked back over to the city, only for a bright light to catch her eye. Concentrating on where it came from, she saw it two more times before a muted bang echoed into her ears. Then the sound of air being ripped apart followed before Weiss jumped off the mech just before whatever it was hit it and a massive explosion consumed it.

Looking back, she saw everyone speed towards the city. A trail of dust being kicked up into the sky was her only clue to what happened to Argent's Paladin as she tried to get back on her feet. She heard another muted bang before another hole appeared in a different Paladin, then it exploded just like the first. She could hear panicked yells coming through the comms as she righted herself.

"Everyone charge the city! We need to stop that artillery unit! Paladins! You need to find cover! Now!" Weiss ordered as a troop truck was torn asunder before her eyes.

Soon, there was a mad dash to get inside the city limits and away from the pinpoint accurate shots. The Paladins and trucks speeding as fast as they could towards the large buildings of the city, Weiss pulled her weapon free from her hip and spun the revolving chamber until she found the Dust she needed and summon a yellow glyph under her. She then took off at high speed towards where the enemy was held up and firing at them. Weiss watched as another two Paladins and three troop transports were destroyed before she reached the first building.

She turned the corner and looked up to where the destructive rounds were coming from and just barely had enough time to raise her hand to summon a triple thick glyph of protection when one of those rounds came right for her. She was nearly thrown off her feet from the force of the shell hitting her defences. The fire and smoke surrounded her and shattered the first two glyphs and cracked the third one. She waved her rapier and the smoke disappeared, clearing the way before her.

Looking up, she saw Ruby standing on top of the building. In her hands was a massive variant of her scythe. Ruby had done something to her weapon to be able to fire those rounds and completely punch through the armour of Atlesian Paladins and armoured trucks. Her red cape blew in the wind as she looked down at her. Weiss felt her breath catch, she looked every bit the Red Death that the soldiers whisper about during the down times. The last time she saw her, she just looked like Ruby, that maybe she was still the same girl back at Beacon. Now she knew better.

Weiss took her position and aimed her blade up at the red-caped girl. Ruby pulled a lever on her
weapon and most of the weapon fell onto the building, returning Crescent Rose back to its original form. They stared at each other for a moment before Ruby disappeared in a flurry of rose petals and appeared before her, scythe swinging towards her.

Chapter End Notes

And another one down!

Before I get into it, I would like to thank everyone for a triple set of milestones for this story.
First off, 400 Kudos! I wish I could thank everyone out there who left a Kudo and I would love to welcome every new person who decided to read this on a whim.
Secondly, 100 subscriptions! I wish I could thank every one of you who decided they would like to get some random email from some random dude from Canada at some ungodly hour about a story that is basically none stop angst. Thank you!
Lastly, 10000 hits! (Less at the time of it being posted but it'll roll over shortly afterwards) Thank you so much! It's all because of you I continue to write because you all enjoy it. Plus I really like seeing people reactions to sudden story twists.

So, we're on the eve of the White Rose reunion, I hope everyone is excited about it because I am excited to write it, but we still have one more chapter before then. And it's going to be a surprise character! Who's it going to be? Who knows! I do! And I can't wait for you all to read it!.

So once again! If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo! If you've already left one, leave a comment! I love reading them and love talking to people. I also post these stories on FF.net. If you read there, come show your support! I also have a tumbler (AngryFaceWritings) Which I don't really know how to use. But you could talk to me, I love discussion almost everything!

And as always, thank you for taking the time to read my little slice of madness!
Nora had never been to the deserts of Vacuo before, and now she was defending the sands against Atlas. She stood on the roof of a hollow building and looked out into the endless sands as people rushed back and forth, loading up airships to bring them to safety when the Atlas attack hit. For the fourth time before dawn, Nora checked the grenades in her weapon as well as the few she had on her person. If it was going to be anything like the attack they stopped when they first got there, she was going to need them.

The sound of someone landing nearby tore her attention away from her weapons; looking over, she saw Ruby hurrying towards her, weapon in hand. Ruby was her friend, one of her last ones. Of course, she also had Ren, but he was not here right now, but Ruby was, so that's okay. She was with her when Ren was attacked by Jaune, with her for the whole week afterwards helping her out however she could. She even convinced her to go into the army with her, so she would be allowed to release her stress and Ren was cared for by them. Win win.

"Nora!" The younger woman said as she got to her. "You need to get on that first ship out of here."

What? Why would Ruby try to send her away? She was still strong, she could still fight. Nora shook her head and pointed out into the great expansive desert, she needed to be here to fight.

"Nora, please. I need you to go and protect the people since the other squads are going to stay here."

She shook her head again.

Ruby sighed and scratched her head lightly. "You want to see Ren, right?" Nora was about to shake her head again but stopped. Of course, she wants to see Ren again. She would give anything to see him again, he was her everything. Without him, she would have died under that building when she was just a child. Her expression softened at the thought of her best friend and loved one. She would never admit it, but she loved him, with every inch of her being. She nodded her head excitedly.

"Well, if you protect the people that we're sending back to the city, you can go with them and go see Ren, okay?"

What a nice friend Ruby is. She knew that Nora was missing Ren dearly, so she was going to send her back home to him. A soft smile came onto her lips at the thought of seeing him again, with another nod, she began to walk towards the first airship that was loading up people. She easily pushed herself on board before it lifted off and flew away from the city, Nora could see the column
of Atlesian soldiers making their way towards the defenders, their lights shining brightly in the darkness.

When the airship dropped them off, Nora and a couple of the soldiers that came with her quickly made a perimeter around the civilians to make sure nothing came close to them. The next couple of hours were the most boring period of her life. She watched as ship after ship came by to drop off large groups of people and returned to go pick more up. It was only when the last ship skipped over them and flew straight over the Sea of Vitae and towards the city of Feiyan on the coast of Vale that she knew that the city was evacuated.

As she waited for her ride home, Nora could feel slight vibrations from under her feet. She quickly ran towards the people who were waiting and pulled out her weapon, Magnhild, and spun the rotating grenade barrels to select her round before firing it into the air, sending a red smoke grenade into the air to signal that Grimm were closing in. Soon, the other soldiers and a second Huntsmen gathered around in time for a Deathstalker to burst from a dune nearby.

People screamed and tried to run away as Nora rushed towards it. Regular bullets bounced off its hardened carapace uselessly as the other Huntsmen began to corral the people to stop them from getting too far away from the group. It let out a terrifying screech as its tail came down and attacked one of the soldiers. With no Aura to protect him, it's golden stinger passed through his flesh like paper and he was hurled into the air with an effortless flick of the tail, screaming as he went.

She needed to get there now, so she jumped into the air and transformed the grenade launcher into the Warhammer and flipped it upside down. Planting both feet on it the Hammerhead, she pulled the trigger and went sailing through the air towards the large creature of Grimm. When she was right above it, she swung her hammer and fired again, sending her straight down towards it. Using the momentum, she spun in the air until she slipped her grip to the end of the shaft and pushed all her strength and weight downwards into a heavy swing.

The creature's body slammed into the ground below, throwing sand all around them as Nora got off of it and it began to recover slowly. Before it could shake off the sudden shock, Nora swung with all her might and knocked its left legs out from under it, knocking it onto its side as the weaker black carapace cracked and was crushed from Nora's superior strength and weapon. Unable to stand up on its legs, the Grimm reached out with one of its pincers and tried to cut her in half. Using a trick taught to her by Ren, the red-headed woman pushed both her hands out to stop the claws from closing in around her, dropping her weapon in the process.

She gritted her teeth as her muscles began to scream out at her, straining her smaller body as the strength of the Grimm was slowly beginning to overpower her. Her arms shook as she forced her muscles to push outwards, stopping the attack. With her arms occupied, she was defenceless from the golden stinger that was slowly raising to stab her. Before it did though, it cried out in pain as a few rounds of rifle fire destroyed one of its eyes. It lashed out with its other pincer to shred that soldier in half. Nora brought her foot up and forced its claw open further so she could reach her hammer just in time.

With a yell, Nora spun around and swung her hammer in time to parry a stinger thrust from it, knocking it away and breaking more of its shell. With one last terrible cry, it tried to crawl away using what was left of its legs until Nora stepped in front of it and raised her weapon above her shoulder. It cried out to her as she threw all her weight into a golf swing and shoved the head of her hammer into its mouth, pulling the trigger and sending a grenade down the Deathstalker's throat; destroying the beast in a blast of pink flames and dust.
With bits of black gore and white bone plates flying in every direction, Nora simply shouldered her weapon and looked around. Three soldiers had died and the other Huntsmen was just finishing off a small pack of Beowolves who decided that now was going to be a good time to attack. She looked back to the other soldiers who were either trying to figure out what to say to the families of the deceased or staring at her, fear of how she dealt with the Deathstalker in their eyes. Her Aura was already healing the large cuts on the palms of her hands.

She was nowhere near as skilled as Ren when it came to Aura control, but nothing was going to stop her from seeing him again after so long. With everyone safe now, Nora resumed her boring patrol, keeping a careful eye out for any more Grimm that wanted to target a bunch of people who were trapped in the middle of the desert.

Luckily for her, the rest of the time waiting for the ships to come back from Feiyan was quiet, save for a few parts where people cried out in the middle of the crowd or a few yells of Grimm coming close but ignoring them in favour of running towards Ritrr. They probably intended to take over the dead ruins for themselves. When the ships came to pick everyone up, Nora pushed her way onto the first one and could hardly stop herself from bouncing with excitement and anticipation of seeing Ren again.

The long trip back to the city pushed the ginger's patience to its limits and she was very frustrated by the time she finally got off the airship. The sun was beginning to set and she all but sprinted off the airfield and towards where Ren was. People yelled at her for shoving past them without a care for not only her own well-being but those around her as well. Eventually, she made it to a large apartment complex that was near the Reclamation HQ, only then did she stop to take a breather.

As quickly as she could, she took the stairs three at a time to get to the fourth floor faster than the elevator normally would. She all but sprinted down the hall and turned a few corners until she arrived at his room, their room. Softly, she opened the door and walked inside. It was a simple, one-bedroom apartment. Small by comparison to others, but it was home to her. The walls were painted a rich green. The whole place was organised and clean, and she could hear and smell of Ren's cooking as soon as she entered the apartment; with a small smile, she walked further into the living room/kitchen area.

She found Ren in the kitchen area, his back to her. He had let his hair out of his ponytail and over time let it grow rather long. It was thrown over the back of the silver wheelchair he used to get around the apartment. Her anger spiked at the thought of him being confined to such a simple device, anger for Jaune, who was once her leader and friend, now hated enemy because he did this to the one person she loved most in this world. She obviously made some sort of noise, because he stopped chopping veggies for dinner and wheeled around to look at her, and all her anger faded away.

He was wearing a green, silk gown in a traditional Mistrali fashion with ties along the side. A soft smile graced his lips as he placed his hands in his lap and looked up at her with his magenta eyes. "Nora." She loved the way he said her name, it made her stomach do flops and her heart do flips inside of her chest. "I didn't know you were coming home; I would have gotten some things for pancakes." She smiled and shrugged. She set her weapon near the door and took her shoes off before walking towards him to help him prepare dinner, making sure there was enough for her as well.

Dinner was steamed rice and veggies with a spicy sauce on top, not what she would have wanted, but Ren liked it, so she liked it as well. Light conversation filled the air, it was only his voice though, she responded with nods or shakes of her head as she ate. When dinner was over, she grasped the handles of his wheelchair and began to push him to the bedroom. He was perfectly fine.
with moving around the place on his own, (She made sure to get as little furniture as possible in order to ease that.) but it still made her feel useful around him, so he let her push him when they were together.

When they reached the end of the small hall, she turned into the bathroom that was just as small as the rest of the apartment. She sat on the toilet seat and began to run the hot water, filling the tub enough to bathe in. He nodded lightly and began to pull at the ties that held his gown together. When he was undressed, she gently slipped her arms behind his back and under his legs and lifted him out of his chair. She could feel his bones through his legs, the muscle atrophy in his legs had eaten away everything he could not use, leaving them terrifyingly thin.

Even without her strength, he was light enough because of his weight loss that a child could probably lift him. She settled him into the water gently before taking her clothing off as well and slipping in behind him. Once again, he was more than able to wash himself; but she always wanted to make sure he was safe and she enjoyed doing it for him, so he let her. She dragged a cloth across his shoulders, wiping the dirt and sweat of the day off his skin. Once that was done, she began to wash his hair, then herself. She stopped her motions when he took her hand in his and examined her palm.

"You got hurt again, didn't you..." He said as his thumb gently traced the area where the Deathstalker claws had sliced her hand open. She may have over-exerted herself when fighting the Gimm, and forced her Aura to pulse through the wound, causing a slight pink hue to the scar. She gently pressed her forehead to his back and shook her head; lying to him never felt good, but sometimes, he just needed to know she was okay. He sighed lightly and released her hand, "You need to be more careful, Nora." She simply nodded and finished washing their bodies.

After drying off, she helped him into a similar gown to sleep in. She pulled on some pyjama pants and a black t-shirt before lifting him out of his chair again and laying him on the bed. She got in next to him after turning off the lights and pulled the blanket over their bodies. He laid on his back and she just stared at him on her side. She loved this man, but she was always too scared to admit her feelings for him. So she just poked his nose and said 'boop'. She made it a habit of trying to do it at least once a day, so he knew that he was loved and that he still had a family with her even though there was no one left from their village.

But that was okay, he knew, in his own way. With a small smile, she reached out and tapped his nose lightly, causing him to blink rapidly as he was caught by surprise by the sudden touch. She simply mouthed her word of love to him. Even as they grew up together, she was too scared to admit her feelings for him. So she just poked his nose and said 'boop'. She made it a habit of trying to do it at least once a day, so he knew that he was loved and that he still had a family with her even though there was no one left from their village.

Their eyes meet each other in the darkness before Ren's finger rose out from the blanket and gently tapped her nose. "Boop." He replied. She smiled and pulled him close, gentle tears fell from her eyes as she silently sobbed into his shoulder. She could not protect him, he was paralysed because of her, because he protected her. She cried into his clothing as his arms wrapped around hers and held her close. He knew she needed it, so he let her.

Chapter End Notes

Nora gets a chapter!
So, I'd like to say sorry about being gone for so long, I moved at the end of last month and things have just been hectic lately and I just couldn't find the time or the energy to write, but with everything done, I can finally put out a new chapter that I've been planning on for a long while now.

Next, I would like to give a large thank you to StreetaAngelJ for taking the time to not only edit this chapter but will be my proofreader and editor for this chapter! Much love!

If you enjoyed, please leave a kudo! If you already have, leave a comment. I love reading and replying to any and all comments. I also post on FF.net under the username TheAngriestFace! If you read there as well please show your support!

And as always, thank you for taking the time out of your days to read my slice of madness.
When Ruby pulled the trigger, the recoil from the large round sent her and her weapon backwards a few feet. She would have been thrown off the building were it not for the massive scythe blade digging into the concrete and shearing through the material slowing her down heavily. With all her strength, she pulled the weapon free of the roof and repositioned it over the ledge again. She pulled the chamber back and ejected the smoking shell casing, letting it fall to the ground with a heavy thud as Pixie quickly handed her a fresh shell. Sliding it into place, she closed the chamber and took aim again.

While she lost track of Weiss during the ensuing chaos, she concentrated on picking off more Paladins and the armoured transports carrying soldiers towards the city. People began to pick up positions to start firing down at the Atlesians as they entered the city, dropping off anyone who survived the initial salvo of Ruby's RPR cannon and Dust propelled heavy ordnance towards them. With the larger targets so close to the city, Ruby was having trouble finding open targets to shoot, until something white caught her eye.

Quickly aiming her oversized variant of Crescent Rose, she fired at the form of Specialist Schnee. The recoil launched her into the air until the blade caught the lip of the roof and anchored her in place. Landing on her feet, she watched the smoke fade away and glowing glyphs appeared around Weiss. The two former partners stared at each other for a few moments before Ruby pulled the release latch, dropping the RPR cannon extension onto the roof. She felt a shiver run through her body from her Aura building up in her legs as she triggered her semblance and sprinted towards Weiss.

Leaving a trail of petals behind her, she appeared in front of the enemy, already swinging her weapon with all her might. She had not forgotten how their last fight had ended, and Weiss was already countering with a black glyph in her hand and a thrust of her weapon. Twitching her head out of the way, Ruby watched the silver blade pass her cheek and took a few strands of hair before jumping away from her. With the opening moves done, Ruby took a moment to examine her enemy closely.

Like before, Specialist Schnee wore her beautiful blue skirt under her white battle plate. Her alabaster hair settling behind her from her off centre hair tie, her deep blue eyes staring deep into Ruby's silver, and studying her opponent just as much as much. The Atlesian took a step forward and held her weapon in front of her, ready for the next round, Ruby took a breath and zoomed towards her quickly, nothing but a red blur to the eyes of ordinary people. Spinning her scythe around her body, she began her offensive against her enemy.

The sharp blade danced around her as Weiss was forced to take step after step backwards to earn herself enough room to properly block the attacks. The sounds of steel and Dust clashing joined the symphony of bullets and cries as the war around them continued. Ruby noticed the chamber on Weiss' weapon turn and jumped back to avoid a sped up attack from her, only to quickly have to dodge another in quick succession. Unused to defending from such speed, she felt the blade bounce
off her Aura a number of times before regaining her balance and swung to clear space between them.

Gaining enough momentum by swinging her weapon around, she dug the tip into the sands to anchor her and began to rapidly fire into Weiss. The woman quickly thrust the air with her rapier and summoned a large spinning white glyph to block the incoming rounds. A dry click echoed in Ruby's ears as she spent the whole magazine trying to hit her. Thumbing the release, the red metal housing for her custom rounds fell to the ground as she reached for a full magazine when Weiss moved.

Spinning quickly, she slashed the air with her weapon and several smaller glyphs appeared in front of her and chunks of ice began to fly at Ruby. Slamming the full magazine into place, she jumped out of the way while using her ammunition as a way to do last minute dodges as the Dust created ice zeroed in on her position. Sprinting around the building they were fighting next to, she used her semblance to speed away from the tracking projectiles and tried to flank her former partner.

When she turned the corner, Weiss was gone. It took Ruby only a second to make it around the building, there is nowhere she could hide in such short amount of time. From the corner of her eye, the scythe wielder saw another glyph form, and Weiss landed on it instantly. Ruby had just enough time to bring her weapon up to block a powerful thrust that knocked her back. She saw a blur of white shoot past her and went to turn as Weiss jumped at her again, just now noticing the series of circular glyphs that now surrounded her.

She remembered this was one of Weiss's staples in combat, forcing the enemy on the defensive by never letting them catch a break. Every time Ruby blocked or dodged an attack, Weiss would just bounce off another glyph in her blind spot, making Ruby unable to maintain stable footing. Twisting her body, the soldier twirled and swiped her scythe around her body, creating a defensive area to try and slow Weiss down just enough to get her timing right. Waiting for the perfect moment, she found it just as the Specialist thrust forward once more.

Suddenly bending over at the waist, she planted her palm on the ground to stabilise her form as her scythe spun on her back. Catching her enemy off guard with a dodge instead of a block, she overstepped and was knocked back by the spinning weapon. With the created opening, Ruby quickly stood back up and grabbed her weapon in her hands, unlatched the scythe blade and fired a round to give it just a little more power before hitting Weiss through one of her glyphs, making her bounce and roll along the ground.

Seeing her opportunity to end this, Ruby launched herself forward and went to stab her weapon’s secondary form into the tanned skin of Weiss. Suddenly, all her momentum stopped. Just inches away from the white chest plate, Ruby's weapon, body, and legs were trapped inside of frozen black glyphs. Pure blue eyes met silver as Weiss grit her teeth and pushed, crying out as she sunk all of her strength into her power, throwing Ruby backwards.

Bouncing off the ground a few times, Ruby felt her Aura stretch to help her avoid breaking anything important as she threw Crescent Rose out. It spun in the air a few times before the blade stuck into the ground, giving Ruby a platform to plant her feet as she recovered from the attack. Sticking her landing on the shaft of her weapon, the momentum pushing them back until they stopped. Standing up straight, she looked across at Weiss as she got up and replaced spent Dust cartridges before spinning them into place. Ruby's cape was flapping lazily behind her as a gust of wind passed them.

A tremor passed through the ground, shaking everything around them and causing Ruby to slip off her weapon. Quickly grabbing her weapon out of the sand covered concrete, she sped off to fight
her old friend, the enemy in front of her. Recovering from the sudden quake, Weiss quickly put her guard up as Ruby slashed at her with a yell. Sparks flashed from where their weapons connected. With the constant spinning of the scythe, it was hard for Weiss to get any attacks in.

When Ruby came for low-to-high swing, Weiss flipped away from the attack. Spinning her revolving chamber to select her Dust, she stabbed the ground and sent a stream of ice straight for Ruby, freezing her legs in place. With nowhere to go, Ruby tried to pry her legs free of the icy restraints before Weiss could launch an attack against her. Pulling with all her might, the ice barely cracked before she saw the white-haired woman tense up and a glyph appears under her feet. She was going for the kill shot.

With no time to attack the thick ice around her ankles and Weiss launching herself towards Ruby, she made a final, last ditch gamble to preserve her life. Spinning the sniper-scythe so it was pointing behind her, she waited for a second for her enemy to get closer before she pulled the trigger, launching the spear-tipped bottom forward and letting go with both hands, turning her weapon into a projectile. Weiss was caught off guard by the sudden attack and was nearly beheaded. Her only saving grace was throwing her entire body out of the way, leaving a trail of blood as the tip of the scythe blade scratched at her cheek.

They watched as the weapon sailed through the air, and impaled itself into a large black body. They both stared as the weapon eviscerated the beowolf and stopped halfway through. All three of them looked at the weapon with a confused look before the creature of Grimm fell to its knees and began to dissipate, leaning on the weapon as it died. Ruby's mind was racing. Why was a Grimm here? She had made sure that the city was cleared of Grimm before the Atlesian forces showed up; so, if they showed up from anywhere, the Atlesians would have fought them first.

Only then did she hear the screaming and the shouting. The sounds of heavy caliber bullets being shot echoed through the air. Something was wrong.

"Watch the left!"

"They're coming!"

"Behind! They're coming from behind!"

"We're cut off from our evac!"

Ruby heard all the shouting as she looked around. Groups of soldiers were running, trying to find a safe place before being chased down by a Beowolf. She witnessed Atlesians and Valenese standing side by side, firing down an alleyway to stop a King Taijitu from devouring them. They managed to blow out both sets of eyes on one head, causing it to cry out and shake its white head from side to side. After a moment of victory, the black head of the snake type Grimm came down from above and swallowed a soldier whole. The rest panicked and began to run, helping those who tripped on rubble, regardless of who they were.

A flash of black caught Ruby's attention. Another Beowolf was charging down the street towards them, and Ruby could do nothing to stop it. She had thrown away her weapon in a last ditch effort to survive and her feet were still frozen to the ground. She watched as it leapt into the air to slash down at her, only to be impaled by several spears made of ice that appeared from the ground all around her in the blink of an eye. Looking over, she was face to face with the silver blade of Myrtenaster, a small glyph spinning around its length, Weiss focusing on not hitting Ruby.

Another quake shook them, the vibrations cracking the ice around her legs enough for Ruby to break free. Rushing to get her weapon back from the decaying Grimm, she looked toward her
enemy and aimed at her. This was her moment, Weiss was looking around, finger in her ear and shouting something to someone, not paying attention. The whispers of the Red Death reminding her that she was the enemy, that the enemy must be killed. She began to put pressure on the trigger, feeling the spring being pulled out of place.

"Left!" Ruby reacted instantly to her mother's voice and quickly pulled the trigger, her weapon jumping against her shoulder.

The bullet sailed through the air just as Weiss turned around, wide-eyed from the sudden shot. The large round sailed right to her and past her head, where a Beowolf leapt from a nearby alleyway and tried to get her. Quickly spinning and stabbing the creature when it already had a bullet in its head, Weiss glared back at Ruby and put her hands on her hips. "You could have hit me! You Dolt!"

"I didn't, princess!"

"You could have!"

Ruby's retort was cut off by another tremor, this one was much more powerful than all the others. Cracks began to form all over the ground, drinking in the sands as buildings began to slowly fall from their foundations. Sprinting quickly, Ruby grabbed Weiss before a building could fall on them, earning a shriek from the woman in her arms. When the building hit the ground, it knocked Ruby off her feet and caused her to drop Weiss in an ungraceful manner. As they slowly got up, Weiss was about to yell at her some more when all the colour drained from her face, her eyes went wide, and a look of pure horror overcame her.

Looking back, Ruby saw what had caused Weiss such distress and understood completely. As the dust settled, Ruby could make out a massive hand gripping the side of a building. Its skin was pure black, with five long claws extending past the first knuckle on the hand as whatever it belonged to pulled itself around the building. Ruby's heart nearly stopped in her chest as she took a few steps back; anything to put as much space between herself and that thing as possible.

The first thing she noticed was its legs. Eight massive legs were tipped with a long white claw that extended past the knee joint, much like the hand. Each leg was attached to a central thorax that was connected to a massive abdomen with thousands of bone white scales and individual red patterns on each piece. While the bottom half resembled a massive spider; that was not the most terrifying part of the monstrous Grimm now crawling out into the open.

Where the spider's head would have been was another body, a human body. It had a wide waist and slim hips, and white bone plates with a red pattern covered the swell of its breasts. Elongated arms were attached to the hands she first saw; its head had long white hair that covered its back and its face had a bone plate over the forehead. Eight glowing red eyes looked over the city, examining everything in its domain. Its size reminded Ruby of the Dragon that attacked Beacon; whatever this was, it was close to, if not bigger than, the Dragon.

It opened its mouth, the bottom jaw splitting open into a pair of fanged mandibles before an ear piercing scream echoed through the desert.

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Tyrian stood on a sand dune overlooking the city. Behind him, a trail of dead bodies with their blood soaking into the sand led the Ancient One to this place. A grin appeared on his face as he reached to the heavens for Salem to accept his gift to his Queen. He had raided seven Atlesian
outposts and Valenese scouting parties to draw the Ancient One here. He watched with a smile on his face as the sands birthed her into the light, bringing her to the surface where the sun might warm her cold skin.

He had done his duty to the Queen; she would be so happy with him. He was giddy with the idea of a reward from her. What would she gift him? Would she ask him what he wanted? What did he want? Ideas and thoughts entered his head before he could even process them. To be by the Queen's side was a given, of course. Perhaps a kiss? Maybe a title and lands in her new world. He was too busy thinking of what he wanted and he almost missed what happened next.

His yellow eyes watched as her beauty came to the light, he listened for the beautiful sounds of her voice to echo through the air as it screamed in its birth. It sent shivers down his spine and goosebumps over his skin. He felt like a father to it, and it was only right to name his daughter, after all. With a broad gesture to her direction, he announced her birth to the gods above and demons below. "I have awakened you! And thus, name thee!"

He shouted to the sands. "Arachne!"

Chapter End Notes

Spider-Grimm, spider-Grimm, does whatever a spider-Grimm does.

So, in keeping with mythological origins for people and things, I based my nightmare creation on the Greek legend of Arachne. Where a woman (Arachne (Pronounced Arak-k-ni)) thought she could weave better than Athena so she challenged her. While there are different versions of the story with different victors, at the end of the tale, Athena turned the woman into a spider so she could weave for all eternity. Yup.

While I have mentioned that if I were to have a theme song to this story, I would have chosen War by Sum 41. While saying that, I think the ending theme would be The Good In Me (Acoustic) by Outline In Color, just my thoughts.

Big thanks to StreetAngelJ for proofreading and editing of this chapter!

I also added a secondary story summary to help draw in new readers, let me know what you think of it!

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo, if you already have and you really like this series, leave a comment. I love hearing what everyone has to say about it and I love talking about it. This story is also posted on FF.net, so if you read there as well, please support this story if you see it!

And as always, thank you for taking the time out of your day to read my slice of madness!
The van bounced on the uneven roads of the Mistral industrial area. Blake was doing her best to keep her heart from jumping up her throat and running away. She knew that the other people sitting in the back of the generic white van with her were not White Fang, but rather a rebellion hiding within their ranks. The Black Fang. Velvet described them as wolves in wolves clothing; a statement that was so accurate it was scary considering the person sitting across from her was a wolf faunus, judging by the tall black ears on top of his head.

Another nasty bump and a sharp turn forced all six of them in the back to grab onto anything they could so they would not fall over. Blake cursed whoever decided that the old roads in the oldest part of the industrial area did not need repairing or replaced. One more sharp turn and the van stopped suddenly. Blake heard the driver and passenger get out and the gravel crunching under their feet as they made their way towards the back of the van.

Blake held her breath, she knew these people meant her no harm, but she was still surrounded by people wearing White Fang uniforms, and some reactions just could not be shaken off so easily. The back doors of the van opened, and the bright sun spilled into the darkened cab. The feline faunus saw Velvet standing next to her lieutenant, the tall man with rough stubble and a buzzed head by the name of Arnab Abyad. He was wearing the usual White Fang uniform save for a tactical vest with magazine holders and a grey and black scarf wrapped loosely around his neck.

"Masks," Velvet said simply as she pulled her own from a pocket and slipped it into place on her face. Velvet was wearing her old battle attire under a black vest with a few pouches for spare ammunition, a pistol in a holster, and a combat knife strapped to her chest. Her Grimm mask had three long scratches along the front, mirroring the scars on her face. While Blake was curious on how she got them, she had saved the questions since she barely had a moment to breathe since joining the Black Fang.

Reaching into a pocket inside her white coat, she pulled out the white and red Grimm mask that Velvet had given her. She stared at it for a moment before turning it over and slipping it over her eyes. She never thought she would ever wear one again, not since leaving the White Fang and Adam. She could feel the weight behind the symbol of fear that she now wore on her face. The others around her slipped their masks over their faces, got out of the van, and began to make their way towards a ladder that led to the roof of a warehouse as another van pulled up behind them and more members poured out.

Reaching the roof, they began to take up their positions for the current operation they were preparing to execute. A member dropped a large bag and began to pull rappelling equipment out and they began to set up the rigs and ropes. They all worked with minimal talking between them. While they were working, Blake walked over to the edge and peered downwards. She saw the other members that came up behind them stacking up beside one of the side doors, ready to barg in at a moment's notice. A gentle hand on her shoulder tore her away from her thoughts as Velvet stood next to her.
"You doing okay?" the rabbit faunus asked gently. Blake simply nodded and looked out over the city; everyone else was living their lives without a care in the world while they were preparing to kill.

"Just thinking that this mask feels a lot heavier that it used to."

Velvet nodded and stared out with her. "I know, Blake. But what we're doing will save so many people when it's over." Blake knew she was right, but still, with the masks and the sneaking around, it was like she never left the White Fang at all. After a few moments, Velvet spoke once more. "Do you mind if I ask you something?" Blake just nodded and waited for the question.

"Do you believe in destiny?"

"No." Blake's answer was almost immediate. "I refuse to believe that my future is out of my hands, and if it is then I will fight tooth and nail to change it even by the smallest amounts." Seemingly satisfied with that answer, Velvet was quiet for a moment before speaking again.

"If my fate comes for me, then I will not hand it over to the gods. I will crush it with mine own hands for I am the master of my fate. Not gods or stars, but I, and I alone."

Blake looked over at her, a surprised look hid behind her mask. "I didn't know you read 'The Fate of Man' by Olive North."

"One of my favourites," Velvet smiled lightly. "Coco always teased me for reading philosophies and such, but it always made me wonder what they would think if they lived here today. How different their views would be," she said with a soft smile on her face. Something caught Velvet’s eye, following her stare over her shoulder, she saw a formation of Mistrali airships floating through the air on their way to the northern territories, continuing the bloodshed out in the field of battle so that peace could continue in the city they stood in.

"Rabbit! We're ready,” Arnab called out to them. Rabbit was the callsign that Velvet gave herself so their real names would not get revealed if something goes wrong and the White Fang learns that a cell went rogue. Blake's callsign was Cat, with her in the van was Wolf, Pig, Gecko and Beetle. While only one other person on the team was a human, she was given the callsign Ram, to make her seem like everyone else. Much like Arnab, whose callsign was Hare. He was the only one who wore a full face Grimm mask that was made out of thick metal, able to stop a bullet. It was designed to look like the creature he was named after.

With one last look out over the city, the two faunus women turned and headed back to the group. Blake quickly put on the harness that attached to a pulley system that they had set up. Velvet, Arnab and the wolf faunus were all similarly geared up and took their positions near the edge of the roof; then they waited. The silence stretched for seemingly an eternity as Arnab pulled out an old pocket watch and checked the time. "They're late for their very important date..." he mumbled behind his mask.

"Maybe they're not coming,” Wolf said.

"They'll come," Velvet assured them. "Raven's Intel hasn't been wrong so far, we just need to have patience."

So they waited. Blake watched as the sun reached its zenith and start to drop on the other side until a few military jeeps rolled up in the front and stopped. Blake watched as a bunch of people wearing the royal blue and deep green camouflage colours of the Mistrali military exited the vehicle. One of them opened the door to a jeep and stood at attention for one who was apparently in charge, with
his crisp uniform and carrying only a side arm. They all entered the warehouse and Blake heard people yelling at each other as soon as they met each other on the inside. A soft click of the pocket watch being closed signalled the beginning of the operation.

The four of them took a few steps back and Blake's stomach began to churn with anticipation and nervousness. Time seemed to stretch longer than what was feasibly possible, her ears twitching back and forth, waiting for the moment. Exactly two minutes later, Velvet gave the ready sign; a hand up with all fingers extended. The people holding their ropes ground their feet against the gravel on the roof, preparing for their role. Blake counted the heartbeats between the ready and the go; they only had one shot at this, and she was not going to let her desire to run ruin it.

Pulling weapons to the ready, Blake shifted Gambol Shroud to its pistol form. Beside her, Velvet pulled out a submachine gun that had been decked out with enough attachments that it would embarrass Crescent Rose. It had a flashlight/laser sight combo near the front to use in dark rooms and for faster aiming, a foregrip for stability as well as regular iron sights on top. An extended clip came out from the bottom with a suppressor mounted on the barrel. On the other side of Velvet, Arnab had an assault rifle with a few attachments to make it easier to use. On the other side of Blake was Wolf, who was brandishing a pair of heavy looking pistols in both hands.

The moment Velvet's outstretched palm became a fist, all four of them sprinted towards the edge of the building and leapt off it. For a few, brief seconds, she was weightless. Blake let the sensation of gravity releasing its hold wash over her, but just as it let her go, it grabbed her and pulled her back as she began to fall. They dropped a few feet until the rope hit a premeasured knot and they stopped suddenly; going from a downwards direction to a sideways one in a second, headed right towards one of the large windows that lined the building.

With their weapons in their hands, they shot out the glass creating a shower of shards as they smashed through uninhibited and breached the building. Blake saw that the meeting they were crashing was getting heated the moment they broke through. The Mistrali official was pointing at a White Fang member while the retinue of both parties had hands on their weapons. Picking her targets, Blake pulled the trigger and sent forth a bullet that ripped through the chest of a White Fang grunt.

The next few seconds were filled with bright flashes as weapons were fired, loud noises as shouting and flashes from muzzles filled the room. The Black Fang members came through the door and dropped more Mistrali soldiers as confusion in the ranks caused people to second guess who was attacking who. The whole thing lasted only a couple of seconds, but it felt as if it lasted an eternity. At the end of it, there were only four people alive from the meeting. Two White Fang grunts, the Mistrali official and the White Fang contact. All weapons were trained on them and they did not know what to do.

"WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING! YOU THINK I WOULD DOUBLE CROSS YOU!?" the Mistrali official shouted out while pulling out a pistol and looking to the White Fang member.

"I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON!" the White Fang contact shouted back. "WE NEED TO LEAVE, NOW!"

But before anything could happen, one of the White Fang grunts turned his weapon to his fellow and used a bullet to remove his brains from his skull. He then turned and put a round in the contact's knee and dropped him to the ground. He was screaming in pain as Black Fang grabbed them and dragged them off away from each other while the rest began to secure the building and drag bodies to spots to create a different story than what actually happened.

Blake watched as the White Fang betrayer walked up to the member he killed and knelt down. He
put three fingers into the pool of blood that was spilling over and dragged them over his face and mask, a symbol of betrayal and a mark that he was part of the Black Fang. "I told Adam that I was getting his drop! He didn't have to fucking do this!" The contact shouted at them. Blake walked over and stood next to Velvet as she stared down at the man with blood seeping from the hole where his kneecap used to be.

His struggling stopped when Velvet reached up and removed her mask from her face. The man's eyes widened and he shook his head. "You..." he breathed out. The brunette stepped forward and crouched down to his level so that he got a good look at her face. Blake saw fear and horror seep into his face as he shook his head lightly. "Why are you doing this?" he asked her.

"Because what you want is not what's best for the world." Blake could hear the hostility in her voice. "Because what you do is murder the innocent and terrorise the kind."

The man gave a sharp laugh. "You think you can go around, thinking you're the big hero by killing me?" he asked. "This is about that kid, isn't it!" Velvet's hands balled into fists and shook with a fury she had never seen her display before. The once quiet, pacifistic woman who would rather let Cardin yank on her ears than let anyone else help her was long gone. "He was like you! He was a traitor and betrayed his own kind!" In the blink of an eye, Velvet and pulled the combat knife out of its place on her vest and dug it into the man's chest. He began to struggle for breath as everyone looked on, only Blake was shocked at the sudden act.

"He was my brother," she whispered to him before she twisted the knife and yanked it out. He fell to the ground and his face fell into a pool of blood, she watched as his last breath sent a ripple through the crimson liquid before his body stopped its twitching. With a nod from the woman, another Black Fang member aimed his gun at the Mistrali official and got ready to fire, but stopped when he began to panic.

"Wait! Wait I'll tell you anything you want to know!" he pleaded with them.

"Do you know where Adam is?" Velvet asked without looking at him. When he did not answer her, she nodded again and three rounds went into him, ending his life. With that, the operation was completed, the White Fang contact and the Mistrali official were dead, but Blake felt dead inside. The Black Fang finished moving the bodies around, firing rounds into corpses to make it look like a deal had gone bad. She watched as one put a pistol in the hand of a Mistrali soldier and fired it a few times into a White Fang grunt before moving on.

Blake watched Velvet leave and followed her out, removing her mask and slipping it back inside of her white coat. Catching up to the rabbit faunus, Blake placed a hand on her shoulder and looked at her. The image of a hardened soldier was slipping, and she could see the old Velvet poking through. She could see tears lining her large, brown eyes, threatening to spill over. "What happened?" Blake asked quietly. Velvet just took a deep breath and shook her head; quickly covering up the fact that she almost cried by wiping her eyes on her sleeves. Blake did not push the topic any further but instead asked what happens next.

"With the White Fang no longer getting any information on Mistrali troop and supply movements, we need to focus on Atlas now. Getting rid of their contacts will be harder, but we need to do it if we're to draw Adam out of hiding and finish this once and for all."

Blake nodded to the idea as people began to load up in the vans again after taking all of their equipment with them. "I just wish there was a better way," she said as she looked up to the blue sky. "I killed so many in Vale trying to hunt him down... It's become more than a movement, it's becoming a cult almost. Like he has indoctrinated everyone he's come across into joining him because that's the only way for the Faunus now. And it terrifies me that I was once a part of that,
that I could have become one of his followers if I hadn't left when I did."

Velvet placed a hand on her shoulder and squeezed, "Come on, we've got more work to do."

Blake nodded and walked to the vans to sit back down between Beetle and Ram.

The doors closed, and she was back in the darkness.

Chapter End Notes

And we're back with Blake's newest chapter with a splash of Velvet!

Arnab Abyad is Arabic for white rabbit, in case you were wondering.

I'm basing Velvet's submachine gun off the Kriss vecter weapon design.

Not much to say today, hope you like it.

Thanks to StreetAngelJ for proofreading and editing with me, a bit help as always.

If you enjoyed, leave a Kudo. If you already have, leave a comment! I love reading them and love replying to them. This story is also posted on FF.net under the same name so if you read there as well then please show your support!

And as always, thank you for taking time out of your day to read my slice of madness!
Yang stood, waiting in the forests of Mistral with her golden blonde hair blowing in the wind that danced between the trees; her left hand balled into a fist as she held her eyes closed, concentrating only on keeping her breathing as steady as she could. She knew this was coming, and she needed to remain in control; or else she would just be repeating her same mistakes over and over again and learning nothing. She inhaled deeply through her nose and held it down to the count of five before releasing it. Opening her eyes at the sound of heavy feet walking towards her, she steeled her will for what was about to come.

Walking towards her like a living nightmare, Adam Taurus calmly strolled past the trees and stood before her. He looked like just as he always did in her nightmares, wearing black pants and a jacket with red trimmings and designs on it with a red shirt under it. The white and red mask hid his eyes from view but she knew his eyes were concentrating on her, she watched as Adam walked past trees and began to circle her slowly, never looking away.

In his gloved hand was his weapon, a single blade in its sheath. He was tapping it against the trunks of trees, trying to unnerve and taunt her into making the first attack. Yang watched as he stepped over a root and stood in front of her; she felt a dull throb in the stump of her arm as she willed her heart to calm. Without another word, Adam reached over, grasped the hilt of his sword, and spread his feet into a ready stance. With a gesture, Ember Celica opened and covered her arm in its protective metal as she also got herself into a ready stance.

The two stared at each other for a few moments, each waiting for the other to act. The restlessness that settled in the pit of her stomach grew too much for Yang, and she charged forward. Adam stood still as Yang yelled out and threw her fist forward as the opening move. The red-haired man raised his hand up and unsheathed the blade just enough to block her attack. Sparks were born where metal met metal, highlighting the features of his mask to Yang's eyes. He pushed her away and she used the momentum to swing her leg around, kicked his guard down, and tried again.

Yang was moving around a lot more than she usually does while fighting (being only able to block with one fist forces her to dodge more than deflect). The nightmare man continued to block with his blade and made lazy attacks against her, gauging her abilities before he dedicated himself for an attack. Waiting for an opening in Yang's defences, he fired off the blade out of the sheath. Its hilt slammed directly into her forehead, disorientating her as he rushed forward and slammed his elbow into her chest before grabbing his blade from the air and slipping it back into its sheath, ready for the next attack.
Landing on her back, she rolled over her shoulder and rested at a kneel. Looking up at the man, he waited for her with a hand on his hilt, but she could feel her Aura stirring inside of her. The hits were enough to get her started on her semblance. It was like an itch that grew every time she was hit, she just needed to wait for the right time to relent and unleash it. Gritting her teeth as red began to bleed into her lilac eyes, she sprinted as fast as she could at the horned man and brought her fist down for another attack, only for him to block as before.

Instead of going for a kick, she brought her stump up and gave into the primal urge to unleash her semblance. Yang could feel the black lines of the tattoo react to her Aura shifting just below her skin, glowing as flames erupted out the dragon's mouth and settled on the metal cap of her jacket. Her Aura took the torrent of flames and folded it into the form of an arm for her to wield. With her flaming arm, she punched out and forced him to artfully dodge out of the way. Rolling back to his feet, he grit his teeth as his grip tightened on his blade.

Flexing her Aura slightly, she pulled her fingers into a fist, slammed her knuckles against each other and gave him a toothy smirk. Her golden hair was aflame, flowing behind her as flames licked off her body. "Come get some, big boy."

He acted like lightning; she caught only a brief glimpse of his form before he was in front of her with his blade out. Red met yellow as Yang blocked and dodged the singing blade, which was disappearing into the sheath and reappearing in a flash. Sparks and shots rang out as they danced in battle in the woods. Yang went to launch an attack with her flame arm once more; he tried to block it but the flames passed harmlessly around the blade and only singed the tips of his horns. Yang swore loudly as she tried to recover but was tripped up when Adam shot his sword out again at her feet, tripping her.

The golden brawler landed on her back and went to roll up when her movements were stopped by the sight of the red blade filling her vision. Looking up, he was standing over her with the tip of his sword pointed directly at her throat. Growling, she slammed her fist against the ground and flopped onto her back. "Damn it!" After a small burst of anger, she deflated with a sigh and her semblance bled out; her flames dying and her eyes returning to the soft lilac they were before. With a flick of his wrist, Adam sheathed the Odachi and blew Yang a kiss.

"Do you mind, it's kinda creepy with you do that..." Yang said as she got up slowly. His movement suggested that Adam rolled his eyes before he brought his hand up and snapped his fingers twice, lazily spun his finger, and placed the sword on his shoulder. The forest around her shifted as a number of trees disappeared and repositioned into a much more open area. Turning back to Adam, he had changed just like the trees; shrinking and growing a pair of tits that drew her gaze.

Wearing his clothes, Neo ran a hand through red hair while pouting at Yang. That pout could give Ruby a run for her money... "Sorry, I forgot to watch the heat..."

Neo simply shook her head and pointed to Yang, tapped her own temple, then patted her thighs. Yang, head, legs. "You need to learn to use your legs more." Spending so much time with Neo had conditioned her to translate her silent ways of talking. A touch or a gesture was easy to figure out while watching her; more complicated things still required her to type it out, but Yang was getting better at it.

"You guys done yet? I'm starting to get a headache!" she heard Emerald call out from the large rock she was currently sitting on, rubbing small circles into her head to try to soothe her brain. She was watching their things while the two other women were sparring.

While the trip to Mistral had been fairly uneventful; when they first got there, the three woman learned that walking to the city would take quite some time. During their travels, Yang was trying
to keep spirits up by joking around and shooting off puns one after another. While Neo thought it was funny, Emerald thought the opposite. Emerald had been on the end of a number of jokes, usually related to the fact that Yang had someone to sleep next to and she did not. She looked over to Neo to see her reaction to the latest joke, but when she looked back to Emerald, she was greeted by a face from her nightmares.

Adam simply stood in her way; he did not move, he did not speak, but she saw the darkest day of her life flash before her eyes: the darkness that was lit up by the flames of chaos, the creatures Grimm running rampant across the city, Blake, her friend and partner, crying out in pain, losing all focus and just charging in to hurt the man before her eyes, the physical pain of her arm being sliced off, and the emotional pain of Blake leaving her. All of that came crashing down around her at once and she lost it.

She tried to attack the imaginary man, succeeding only in setting a bush on fire and filling a tree full of buckshot.

It took nearly an hour of Neo stopping her from hyperventilating into unconsciousness and keeping her from hurting Emerald before she finally calmed down enough to face the truth. She realised that what Emerald had just made her see could very well happen. They were in Mistral. Adam was here somewhere. He could easily show up along their path. If this was how she reacted if she saw him, then she stood no chance in fighting him.

So, they trained. First by having Emerald make her see him. She quickly got over the sensation of seeing him again. Then walking around, as interacting with him became easier, Emerald used the same technique she used to make Neo look like Ruby and her dad to interact with her. She made Neo into Adam. It was easy to mimic his weapons, using the hidden blade as his sword and the umbrella as his sheath; the size difference was harder to overcome, but they managed to make it work.

She still had her moments of terror during their sparring sessions. Where her spirit would waver, so too would her Aura; causing her flame arm to lose its solid state and pass through his blade and throw her off balance. It was surprising how much she needed to pay attention to what her Aura was doing in order for it to hold its form, but she was getting better at it. Her footwork still needed some work, but a small constant improvement was better than nothing.

After brushing a few leaves and twigs out of her hair, Yang walked over to their bags and pulled out a bottle of water when she felt Neo tug on her jacket. Looking over, she saw the smaller woman tapping her puckering lips at her direction. Yang just smiled and lightly placed her finger on them, causing her to open her eyes. "Take him off first, then kisses."

Neo pouted cutely as her clothing and hair transformed from the black and red of Adam to her usual brown, pink and white. "Thanks, shortcake," she said before giving her the quick peck on the lips she wanted.

Their cute moment was ruined by the gagging noises coming from the woman sitting on the rock nearby. "You disgust me," she cried out.

Yang shot her the best Schnee glare she could, "You're just-"

"Don't!"

" Green with envy!"

Emerald cried out with anguish as she gripped her hair, "You already used that one! You can't use
the same terrible joke twice!"

"I guess that's just your pun ishment."

Another angry groan from Emerald made Yang laugh as she took a long drink from the water bottle she had pulled out. While she was drinking, she missed the dark skinned woman mumbling something about punishment. When she pulled the bottle away, a sight no mortal should ever see filled her eyes. Leaning against the tree, arms up in the air and smiling at her was the old shopkeeper than ran the dust store in Vale looking as seductive as he could with a not so subtle wink in her direction, as naked as the ancient day he was born.

Yang shuddered at the wrinkled illusion. "There are a lot of things that I'm okay with in this world, and that is not one of them."

The illusion faded away as the perpetrator began to rub her eyes. "Well, I think it hurt me more than it hurt you..." With Emerald's head pounding, they decided to camp out there for the night.

Yang was laying on her back, her jacket and boots sitting nearby, Neo wrapping herself around her, fingers gently tracing the tattoo on her shoulder as her head rested on her favourite pair of natural pillows. Emerald was off collecting firewood for their camp fire as Yang gently ran her one hand across the smaller girl’s bare shoulders. The gentle crackling of firewood filled the air as Yang stared off into the stars above.

She must have let out one too many sighs because Neo stopped tracing the patterns of her tattoo and leaned up slightly so they could look into each other’s eyes. "Sorry," Yang whispered to her as she pushed some strawberry hair out of her face. "I’m just worried about Ruby, I have a lot to make up for." The smaller woman nodded as she wrapped her arms around Yang’s body and held her close. She could feel Neo’s breath on her skin, sending goose bumps across her flesh.

"What about you, got any siblings?” Yang could feel her hold her breath and the hesitation spoke volumes, it was something the smaller one did not want to talk about. Eventually, she shook her head against her chest and settled in for the night. Yang resumed running her fingers through the tri-coloured hair in a calming manner until she relaxed enough to fall asleep. The rest of the night went by without any troubles. Neo woke up Yang when it was her turn for watch, and when Emerald woke up in the morning, they had a new direction to walk in.

When the dark-skinned woman told them the story of what she had done to Jaune, she briefly explained about the dream with Ozpin where he had managed to convince her to change sides. "He told me we need to head towards the Mistrali checkpoint to the east, someone will be there to open the back door for us," she said as she stomped out the last remains of their campfire. Neo and Yang packed up what they had and when Yang asked who was going to meet them, the woman just shrugged.

Hours after they left their campsite, they arrived at the Mistrali checkpoint and Yang was surprised at what she saw. Concrete walls had been erected to block off anyone from trying to go down the road, barbed wire to stop anyone from climbing over and sniper towers to keep an eye on everything around. They stuck to the deep forest until they found the door they were supposed to find. Then, they waited, and waited, and waited.

The sun began to set and Yang was starting to get anxious. They had been sitting around for hours and no one other than the soldiers of Mistral walked by; luckily there was only one at a time and Emerald managed to fool him into not seeing them as he would pass them while on guard duty. Of course, they could not make any noise so they all remained silent as they waited. While she sat against a tree with Neo sitting between her legs and her back against Yang, Emerald was pacing
back and forth, trying to keep her sanity in check.

Yang had her arms wrapped around Neo and her chin resting on her head as she watched the smaller woman dragging a finger over her fingernails and colouring them in the blink of an eye. The long stretch of silence was interrupted when the door began to make strange noises like someone was unlocking the door. Slowly, everyone began to gather around the door, ready to get past the soldiers and the checkpoint. When the door opened, Yang froze.

Wide lilac eyes met the amber gaze of Blake Belladonna.

Chapter End Notes

And once again, I torment you with cliffhangers that just kick you off. Muhaha!

Big thanks to StreetAngelJ for proofreading and editing of this chapter!

If you enjoyed, leave a Kudo! If you already left one, please leave a comment! I love reading them and I love replying to them. This story is also posted on FF.net so if you read there as well, stop by and show your support!

And as always, thank you for taking the time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness!
The arid winds dried and cracked her lips. The scorching sun turned her skin from a pure snow white to a light bronze. The heat that radiated off the sands and buildings sucked the moisture from her eyes, making them water.

Despite all of these things, Weiss Schnee's blood ran cold.

The Grimm, this monster had shown up from under the ground and was now standing in the middle of the battlefield. Both factions had stopped fighting in favour of simply surviving this day. The giant Grimm let out a bone-shaking scream and Weiss held her hands over her ears to try and save her mind. When the screeching was over, Weiss looked over to Ruby, who was just recovering from the scream herself and wondered how they are going to manage to get out of this alive.

"What is that thing?"

"I don't know," the red cloaked woman said as she gripped her scythe. Before anyone could do anything else, a new noise began to echo through the sands. Eyes moved back up to the Grimm and the Specialist recalled what that sound was, it sounded like someone was coughing when they were sick. They watched as the massive creature brought its hands to its mouth and began to cough and hack up something from deep inside of its throat.

After one last disgusting sound, a large glob of black ichor came from its fanged mouth and into its waiting hands. It spilt over and between its fingers, the fluid was viscous and flowed like sludge. Finished, it took what remained in its hands and the Grimm began to wipe them on buildings, scraping the thick fluid off its white claws. While it was doing that, the two women watched one of the tendrils of black ichor that fell to the ground as it began to settle down the street from them. The hairs on Weiss's neck began to stand on end as she took a step back, prepared for anything.

As it settled on the ground, strange shapes began to form inside of it, shifting and moving within the blackness. One of the bumps began to move towards the edge, pushing against its confines, trying to escape until a set of long claws pierced through the fluid and tear it open from the inside. Opening the hole larger, a Beowolf fought for its freedom into the sunlight. The newborn Grimm was slow to get to its feet, but quickly recovered and shook out what remained on its black fur before letting out a howl to the sky as another Beowolf followed its brethren into the open.

One after another, the Grimm came from the blackness in an unorganised rank and file. A horrid
thought raced through her mind as she watched the juvenal creatures get their bearings. The colossal Grimm created the mysterious black ichor. Whatever this Grimm or the ichor was, it created Grimm.

Like blood in the ocean, the Grimm that was just birthed down the street picked up her despair and began to charge towards her. Two dozen Beowolves, Boarbatusks and Creepers were charging towards, easily navigating the fallen building that lay between of them. She heard Ruby swear, something that was just as a foreign concept to Weiss as the birth of Grimm, and watched the younger woman take a few steps forward and load up a fresh magazine into her weapon. She spun it around before she drove the blade into the ground and took aim. Just before she pulled the trigger, Weiss took a step forward.

With a wave of her weapon, a complex series of glyphs formed in front of Crescent Rose. Ruby shot her a cold, silver glare as Weiss took up a position next to her. "No one is leaving this place alive unless we take that thing out," she spun the rotating chamber of her weapon to double check her Dust before looking back over to Ruby. "Neither of us can kill it, we have to work together." The glare softened slightly as they stared at each other for a few moments as the Grimm continued their advance. With the smallest nod, she looked back down the scope and pulled the trigger.

The shot travelled through Weiss's glyphs and was transformed into something more. Shards of ice streaked through the air and found their marks, freezing limbs and hoofs to the ground, causing some of them to stop suddenly or trip into one another. Round after round came from the barrel of the sniper scythe, custom casings flying through the air and landing in the sands as a horde of Grim were slowed one at a time until they were all stopped. Ruby brought the weapon out of the ground and loaded up one more round and tensed her legs. Weiss summoned her own glyphs and prepared for the attack.

At once, the two women became blurs of white and red. Ruby using her semblance of speed and Weiss using her glyphs, they crisscrossed each other as they sped down to the other end of the street, attacking and slicing through the frozen Grimm where they stood. The space between the buildings began to fill with the black, oily smoke of Grimm Dissipation as they both arrived at the end at the same time. Weiss was catching her breath as Ruby reloaded.

Suddenly, a King Taijitu came out from between a pair of buildings. Caught off guard, Weiss did not have enough time to defend herself as long fangs came towards her. Just as quickly as the Grimm appeared, a flash of red dove in front of her. With its white mouth held wide open and Crescent Rose in its maw, Weiss saw Ruby struggling to hold it at bay. Quickly, Ruby twisted her wrists and spun in place, spinning her weapon to spin the creature. It released its hold on her weapon soon after and with a practised swing and a turn, she decapitated the snake Grimm with ease.

With her back exposed, the black head of the snake chose this moment to strike out at Ruby. Weiss charged out with her blade and drove it through the roof of its mouth before the teeth could touch the red cloak. The beast fell and she pulled the thin blade out of the black flesh. They looked at each other and nodded, a silent understanding passed between the two. A strange feeling filled Weiss's chest, despite the time apart and the different places in the war, the two fell into the familiar patterns of their partnership seamlessly.

A terrible coughing noise filled the air once again. The two woman turned to look up at the colossal Grimm as black ooze flowed from its fanged mandibles and onto the ground around it as it stomped through the city. "If we don't do something about this, we'll be overrun in no time," Weiss said as she slipped a full cartridge into her weapon.
"Can you summon your knight again?" Ruby asked.

"I can't summon him big enough to cleave through it."

"A bigger blade..." the young woman muttered. Her eyes widened with an idea and she looked off towards the buildings, "I need my Reaper Cannon." She then ran off towards one of the buildings that were knocked over with renewed vigour.

"Your what?" the white-haired woman called after her as she gave chase.

When they arrived, Ruby began to throw piles of stone and building aside, searching for whatever a 'Reaper Cannon' was. When she finally found it, Weiss recognised it as the massive attachment that she was using on her scythe when she first got there. Ruby quickly looked it over before collapsing it into a more compact form and settling it under her cloak. Even though she had her weapon, she continued her search until she found an ammunition box and opened it. "Fuck!" she hissed as she pulled out a single large round. From the size of the round and what it was fired from, it was clear to Weiss who exactly was taking out her Paladins in single shots.

Before Ruby could go searching for more rounds for the even more oversized gardening tool, the sound of the Colossal Grimm creating more made her stop. "We don't have time to find any more shells so we only have one chance at this." Weiss nodded and followed Ruby as they began to run down the street, planning on cutting it off. As they ran, the scythe wielder pulled a small black box with a short antenna on it and spoke into it. "Midori! I need you to bring those mobile anti-air turrets down Fifth Ave! We're taking this thing down! That's an order!"

"Yes Ma'am!"

A sad thought flashed through Weiss's mind, how Ruby had moved on to leading soldiers on the front lines instead of leading a team of young Huntresses-in-training. She quickly pushed the feeling away to deal with it later. Right now, they had a monster to take down. Pressing the comm in her ear, she clicked into the general communications channel and gave orders. "All forces, converge on Fifth Ave! Do not engage the Reclamation army! Remaining Paladins are to concentrate fire on my mark! Pass out whatever we have to the Reclamation soldiers!"

"But Specialist, the enemy is routeing! We could-"

"Either pass out those weapons or I'll can you for insubordination after I hurl you at that monster during the opening salvo! Your choice."

"Y-yes Specialist."

With everyone prepped, Weiss and Ruby began to clear out the zone where they would launch their attack from. By the looks of it, Fifth Ave was once a beautiful roadway that led into the downtown core. Planters for trees and a nearby park once made for a beautiful scene. Now, it was crawling with Grimm and sand had overtaken what little beauty was left after the bombings. Ruby and Weiss worked together as one to cleave and slice their way around the area they were going to use. Muscle memory and forgotten training kicked in as the two former friends danced around each other, lost in the oily smoke of Dissipation.

The sounds of gunfire broke through the smoke as the combined force of those who remained quickly set up a defensive line. What remained of their paladins lined up behind the soldiers as large jeeps with massive boxes filled with explosives on the back parked next to them. Weiss watched as boxes of armaments were opened and contents were passed around. The green spear tips of Valenese dust propelled grenade launchers were shouldered as more advanced Atlesian
rocket launchers were passed to whoever was near them.

Whoever did not get a heavy ordnance weapon found themselves shoulder to shoulder to add their strength to the wall of rifle fire that was holding the Grimm horde at bay while everything was moved into position. Ruby and Weiss were standing on top of a building and directed their respective forces to ensure their one shot had the best chance of success. Drawn by the mass of people, the half-spider Grimm began its approach down the street, shaking the ground with each step of its spider legs.

Finally, Ruby pulled the Reaper Cannon off her back and attached it to her weapon, transforming it into the massive scythe that turned an already absurdly large weapon into an even larger, more absurd one. With one final nod from the black and red-haired woman, Weiss clicked into the comms and gave her commands, "Concentrate all fire on the Colossal Grimm. Make every shot count!" she waited for a few beats before calling out with a slash of her weapon, "FIRE!"

"LIGHT IT UP!" Ruby shouted into her device.

It was like someone flipped a switch. One moment, the air was clear and silent. The next instant, flames and the screaming of projectile rockets filled everyone's ears as each and every person unloaded everything they had into the creature. Weiss watched with anticipation as most of the weapons found their marks and exploded against it. It screamed out in pain as it flailed, trying to defend against the sudden assault, but like a swarm of insects, a single swipe can only block so little against everything they had.

For a solid thirty seconds, the air was filled with fire as Weiss held her form. She held her breath as the last rocket streaked across the air disappeared amongst the settling smoke that blocked their view. She forced herself to breathe as she waited for the view to clear to see what damage had been dealt. The handle of her blade cried out from her tightened grasp as the seconds ticked. She heard the sounds of Crescent Rose being shifted in its owner's hands. The moment was broken by a single, gargled cry.

As the smoke cleared, Weiss saw that it was kneeling on all the legs on its right side, one lone leg still trying to stand on the left side as the others were on the ground, bleeding from where they were severed. Its left arm dangled loosely by its elbow as its right hand rested on a building, fingers missing and straining to hold its weight. Its face was worse off, one of its fanged mandibles were hanging by exposed tendons while three of its eyes were extinguished, black goo leaking down its cracked white mask. It let out another wounded cry as it tried to stand back up.

"Weiss!"

Snapping back to reality, a series of black glyphs formed around Ruby as she jumped into the air, the glyphs holding her in place. While they had the other two members of their team on hand to help when they first created this technique to take down the Nevermore in the Emerald Forest, Weiss has since become more adept in using her glyphs. Carefully, she aimed the living projectile that was Ruby Rose. Carefully running the numbers in her head, she adjusted the angle in degrees and upped the amount of force to shoot her at.

"Think you can make the shot?" Ruby asked, her eyes still on the target.

A small smile formed on Weiss's lips as she finalised the trajectory, "You know I can." From the corner of her blue eyes, she saw the lips of the younger woman curl upwards slightly. With a final thrust of her rapier, Ruby shot full speed towards the Colossal Grimm with her extra large weapon, a flurry of red petals left in her wake.
Without fail, Ruby was sent directly towards the one leg that was still left on its left side. The massive blade hooked onto the thigh and the momentum pushed the young woman upwards. She followed the momentum for a full circle before firing off a single, normal round and launched herself skywards. Twisting in the air, she drove the large scythe blade into its opened mouth and stopped. The woman and the Grimm stared at each other. Ruby floated in the air for a moment before pulling the second trigger and launching upwards using recoil from the specialised ammunition.

The massive crack made Weiss flinch as Ruby was launched into the sky. The larger scythe blade sheared the Grimm's head in half as she flew upwards. She watched as the head split apart and the creature tried to stay alive just a few more moments before it finally fell to the ground with a heavy thud. A thunderous cheer erupted behind her as a smile crept across her face. Ruby disengaged her extra add-on for the weapon and tried her best to curve herself back to the others.

While everyone cheered behind her, something wriggled at the edge of Weiss' mind; something was wrong but she did not know what. She stared at the corpse as it bled across the roads and between buildings. That's it, it was bleeding, not Dissipating. The sky should be choking with the oily smoke, but none came from the body. Movement caught her eye, and she scanned over the Grimm's scaled abdomen for what drew her eye but saw nothing. She stared long and hard until she saw one of the scales shift, then another, and another.

Dread filled her soul as she watched one scale lift up from the dead body, eight legs forming under it as the scale cracked in half. The one scale turned into a spider type Grimm the size of a large dog. Then another scale popped off and grew legs, and another. Like a wave, the scales of the Grimm came to life and began to scuttle across the ground, screeching as they went. Her eyes went wide as the black flesh of the Grimm began to melt and turn into more black ichor from which Beowolves and Ursi were breaking through at an alarming rate.

The celebrations were cut short when everyone resumed their fire at the newborn horde that was several thousand strong. "EVERYONE NEEDS TO RETREAT! NOW!" Weiss shouted into her comms as the horde overwhelmed the defensive line like a wave on the sea and sent everyone into a panic. Trucks were quickly loaded with as many people as they could save before driving away. She saw an entire transport disappear under the swarm when they stayed too long to save more people. People who were torn apart by the creatures. How could you defend against such hatred? Such malice?

From her perch on top of the building, she had some time before the spider Grimm got to her, enough time to plan. Running ideas through her head, she could only think of a few before a zip of red caught her eye. Ruby had safely made it to the ground and was now talking to someone in one of the mobile anti-air trucks. From her body language, she looked like she was shouting at them before she turned and began to fire into the swarm, drawing the attention as the truck drove away unmolested by the Grimm before dashing into the desert.

With no other options, Weiss formed a large glyph off the side of the building and ran towards it as the spider Grimm reached the roof. Leaping off as her glyph glowed and spun, a white Nevermore shot out and Weiss landed safely on its back. Holding onto its feathers, she flew safely above the death below and followed the trail of rose petals to where her former partner was running. Getting closer, she could see another type of Grimm giving chase. They looked similar to the Beowolves, but more like hounds, oversized wolves with lean bodies. Sprinting on all fours, they were slowly catching up to the young Rose who was still drawing aggro.

Flying in close, Weiss shouted her name to get her attention. Ruby did not have enough time to jump at her so Weiss decided to take a risk. Flying as close as she could, she gripped the feathers
of her Nevermore and rolled to the side. At the arch of the roll, Weiss looked up to see she was directly above the red cloaked woman and reached out with her free hand. Ruby jumped and caught her hand as the avian summon finished its roll with her now safely on board.

"Behind us!" Ruby shouted over the blowing winds.

Looking in that direction, Weiss saw a whole flock of Griffons and Nevermores hot on their tails. ‘It seems that the ichor could not only produce land based Grimm but air based ones as well,’ she thought.

"Keep it steady!" Ruby yelled while quickly folding her weapon into the rifle form. Then she turned around fully and began to open fire into the flock. With only one weapon, she could not keep all of them at bay as the faster Griffons and smaller Nevermores caught up with ease and began to harass them.

Shaking from side to side, Weiss did her best to keep space between them, gritting her teeth as she felt her grip on the summon falter with each passing shake and attempted landing. Only when a massive shadow was cast over them did Weiss take her eyes off the front. She looked up to see an even larger Nevermore blocking out the sun. With a wave of its wings, it sent down razor sharp feathers that ripped through her summon, causing it to fall out of the sky.

The two of them screamed as the summoned Nevermore tried no avail to stay in the air. Plummeting to the sands, the last thing Weiss saw was the sand below them screaming into view. Then, everything went black.

The next time she opened her eyes, she was staring at the sand as it moved around her. It took a few moments to orientate herself and realise that Ruby was carrying her over her shoulder. "Ruby put me down!" Weiss called out quietly. The red cloaked woman stopped and set her down. The sudden shift made her head pound fiercely as she reached for the source of her pain. She felt old, sticky blood on her skin and could see that some of her white hair was stained pink with her blood.

Ruby had set her against a strange stone outcropping that stuck out on the of desert sands "Weiss, you okay?" she asked as she moved some stained hair out of Weiss’ face to look at her wound.

"What happened?"

"When we fell, you hit your head really hard. You were bleeding and I needed to get you out of there..." she said quickly. Not far in the distance, Weiss saw the advancing swarm of Grimm stampeding their way.

"How long was I out?" Weiss asked as she put pressure on the wound.

"An hour, maybe more?" Ruby responded as she followed her gaze. "I think they'll be here in about five minutes."

Ruby sounded out of breath. Both were drained of their Auras and energy from the battle in the city and their escape afterwards. "Ready for a final stand?" Ruby asked as she took her weapon out and looked over it one last time. With a nod, Weiss pulled Myrtenaster out of Ruby's belt. A sudden wave of lightheadedness washed over her and she fell to her knees as Ruby took aim. Weiss went to use her blade to help her get to her feet, but when she stabbed the ground it made a hollow thunk.

Looking at the sand under her, she stabbed it a few more times to make sure she was not imagining things. Each time she did, another hollow thunk sounded below her. Quickly shoving her hands into the hot sands, she felt wood and metal on her skin. Digging quickly, she found a latch and quickly
opened the trapdoor into some kind of basement. Suddenly the stones made sense, this was a house at some point, and she just found their cellar. "Ruby!"

Looking back, Ruby saw the opening and quickly ran for it. It could easily fit both of them as Weiss descended down the old steps, followed by Ruby as she closed the door behind them. They stepped as far away from the cellar door as they could, watching the sunlight shine down onto the wooden steps as the ground began to vibrate and shake with the coming tide of beasts.

All at once, the light was blocked out by the sea of Grimm, and they prayed that the wooden door would hold...

Chapter End Notes

God this was a fight, but I'm happy with how it turned out.

Sorry to anyone who's afraid of spiders, just kinda the thing at the moment.

Thank you to StreetAngelJ for the Edit and proofreading.

If you enjoyed, leave a Kudo! If you already left one, please leave a comment! I love reading them and I love replying to them. This story is also posted on FF.net so if you read there as well, stop by and show your support!

And as always, thank you for taking the time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness!
The Fractured Reflection

Chapter Notes

I hope you're ready for another healthy dosage of Angry_face (TM) depression!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Fractured Reflection

A mirror becomes a blade when it is broken.

A stick becomes a flute when it's loved.

-Yoko Ono

"Ready. Aim. Fire!"

The crack of rifle fire echoed over the chill of the Atlesian summer air. Brigadier General Winter Schnee stood at attention as she saluted with the rest of the officers to her left and right. Standing in front of them all was General Ironwood. All of them were wearing their parade dress uniforms, shoes shined and uniforms wrinkle free with creases ironed in place. Every piece of their uniform was looked over for perfection, for the honoured dead deserved nothing less.

"Ready. Aim. Fire!"

It was so easy to lose track of those around her when she stood at the General's right hand for so long. Even before that, as a Schnee, she was raised to be above everyone and everything around her. But the General was a human above all else, and through his actions, she too remembered that she was only human. And as a human, things need to be celebrated, cried over, and remembered. From the smallest child to the oldest parent, life was worth every rise and fall, no matter who you were in the world.

"Ready. Aim. Fire!"

At least Mistral had enough respect for the dead to send bodies back, and if they could not, they at least gave the effort to bury them.

Before her, three dozen white caskets were suspended over open graves; each having a white flag with the spear and gear of Atlas draped them. Each casket held a body; a soldier of the Atlas Military. Each casket held the body of someone who was once a daughter or a son, a father, a mother... They had friends and family who loved them, and now they had nothing. The family and friends they once had were crowded around their loved ones, saying their final goodbyes before the bodies were lowered into the cold Atlesian soil.

On a hill nearby, a single soldier pressed a brass bugle to his lips and began to play a haunting melody over the stillness of the afternoon air. Winter could hear people’s sobs and choked cries as children were hushed for wondering why their parents were being hidden, buried in the ground. As
the last call of the bugle lingered over the cemetery, soldiers began to work systematically and
folded each flag with precision. Once the flag was folded into a triangle, they would present it to a
family member, then move on to the next one.

Once they were finished, the bodies were then lowered by pulleys into their final resting place.
Winter watched as one woman walked towards a lowering casket and placed a hat on top of it
before it got too low. It was black with a single blue band wrapped around it. From her position,
she saw the General's jaw clench and his hands shake as they balled into fists, fighting off the
emotions that make them human. Winter was trained, but it was still hard for her as well, she was
blinking a lot more often, keeping the tears at bay, she recognised her from when Ironwood
knocked on the Coal family’s door to tell them their son had died.

With him, she saw how families were torn apart by a few simple words. Some were silent, simply
numbed by the news and unsure what to do now. Most people broke down in hysterical crying.
Others were simply angry and lashed out at anyone near them, most of the time it was Ironwood
himself. She watched as a man that was half the size of the General pushed him across the hall and
shouted at him, saying it was his fault his daughter was dead. Winter only unsheathed her sabre
twice, they got the message crystal clear after that.

The other officers began to file out one after another as the holes were filled with dirt. The ending
of the burial ceremony had several families leaving with tears in their eyes and sorrow in their
hearts. A few people stayed behind to stay just a little longer with the dead; the General was one of
them, and Winter refused to leave his side. Ironwood personally went to each of the Specialist's
families to deliver the news. Winter began to go with him after he returned with a few cuts on his
face from when someone threw a bottle at him.

With the last grave filled, the General finally left his place and walked between the fresh soil,
Winter not far behind with her cane in hand. They walked silently through the military graveyard;
each grave was marked by a small, white stone pillar that stood two feet tall. Each bore the name
of those who were buried, the day they were born, and the day that they died. Each plot was spread
out perfectly from the others, forming neat and straight lines all over. Winter stopped when
Ironwood did; the two officers were now standing in front of a large stone statue depicting soldiers
from each era of Atlas.

From the settlers of Mantle with swords and shields to the first musketmen and onwards to the
modern soldier, each of them stood in a large circle holding up a large torch that had been lit for
the first time over ten years ago. The tomb of the unknown soldier. Flowers were laid before it
along with pictures of people who believed to be dead but have not been found yet. Etched
into a brass plate, the words of the tomb stood out for all to read:

For every soul named and laid to rest, a hundred go unnamed, unremembered and unmourned in
the unknown.

Behind them, footsteps sounded on the stone path they stood upon. Turning to see who it was, she
saw it was the same woman who placed the black hat on one of the caskets. The white-haired
woman remembered her as the mother of Specialist Flynt Coal. Her skin was a few shades darker
than her son’s, and heavy bags sat under her eyes from age and nights spent awake, mourning for
him. Her frizzy black hair was pulled back into a small bun, streaks of grey mixed in. She was
wrapped in a black jacket to protect from the chill as she held the folded flag in her hands.
"Mrs Coal," Ironwood stepped forward and stood before her. While she stood almost two feet below him, she never wavered. "Once again, I am sorry for-

"Shut it, Ironwood!" she interrupted the General while looking up at him, "I hope you're happy with yourself. It's true what they say though, the old wage wars and it's the young who die!"

"Mrs Coal," Winter interjected, "I wish there was something we could have done."

"So do I!" The older woman's attention was now on Winter. "If you had died in his place, then my boy would still be alive, and his father could see him again instead of working a job with nothing to show for it just to put food on the table! He couldn't afford any sick days so he can't be here for my Flynt's burial!"

"Mrs Coal, please," Ironwood spoke up sternly, "your son knew exactly what he was doing when he volunteered to join the Special Operations Unit."

"I'll tell you one thing, Ironwood," the woman said as she pointed at him, "My son left me, and all that came back was a flag." She clutched the folded flag tightly to her chest as her eyes welled up and spilt over. "The only thing I have left of my baby boy is a flag!" she cried out to him over and over again as her sorrow flowed freely. Winter could do nothing but look away in shame since she was lucky enough to make it out with a blown leg while others lost everything.

A man walked up to the crying woman and placed a hand on her shoulder. "Come on, Opal. That's enough now." He was a young man with bright orange hair and green eyes. What stood out was long, thin whiskers that stood out from his cheeks near his upper lip. She knew him as Bromo Katt, the older brother of Specialist Katt who had died with Flynt in Mistral. She remembered that the Katt family were more on the numbed side when they were told the news. Neon's father and two brothers held their mother as she broke down in tears, then Bromo numbly thanked the general before quietly closing the door.

The young man simply nodded to them before helping the grieving mother back to the Katt family who was waiting for their ride. Winter was glad she was not going through it alone. Looking back at Ironwood, she saw him staring at the ground and shaking his head. "I failed them, Winter," he began softly, "I failed them. They were my Specialists. My soldiers. My students. They came to my school looking to defend the world against the darkness, and now they're dying by the hands of men over this stupid war..." He was angry, furious with himself that it has gone this far.

He was not the only one that felt that they had failed in some way or another. Memories of what had happened to her detachment of soldiers flooded her mind, of fire and shrapnel as it rends through armour and Aura alike. If she had been better, or more observant, eighteen lives could have come home instead of six. She blamed herself, wishing that she had died instead of the man she talked to just before the ambush. Congratulating him on becoming a father before the fire started.

Winter let him release his frustrations through his own misgivings for a few moments before she took a deep breath and stood at attention in front of him, earning a look. "If we're done here, sir, there is something I'd like to discuss with you." The General took a deep breath and collected himself. The moment of remembrance and grieving was over; now he had a war to win. With a determined nod, they made their way to the waiting car. Once inside, the driver rolled up a screen that cut off the back seats from the driver's seat.

"I trust you looked over the file I gave you?" Winter asked as she looked out the window. The scenery began to slowly shift as they picked up speed and drove down the winding roads of Atlas.
"Yes," Ironwood began as he reached into his pocket and pulled out a small black box. Pressing the switch, a part of it flipped out and a red light began to blink as a high pitch hum came from it. That device should cancel out any potential bugs that may have been planted either inside the cab or on their bodies without them knowing. "and it concerns me greatly that our intel division hadn't caught wind of this."

"Perhaps they're in on it?"

"Maybe. I still don't like it," Ironwood sighed as he placed the device on the seat between them, "Are you sure these files are real?"

"Weiss wouldn't lie to me." That much was true, ever since they were young she had always gone to her big sister whenever anything bothered her. Even in the large, cold manor, Winter had always had a warm smile for her younger sister; except for the day their father had tried to marry her off to someone she did not even know the name of. It was good for business and the family, he had told her. She had told him off and joined the military to escape him, only to realise that her actions had the consequence of leaving little Weiss alone with him.

So she did her best to help her younger sister and train her the best she could to prepare her to become a Huntress; to escape their father's inexhaustible reach and influence. She was so proud of Weiss when she heard that she would be leaving Atlas to attend Beacon. That pride turned to ash as Weiss became just another name on a roster when the war broke out. People were calling it a police action at first, a security measure and a force to root out the White Fang. It was only after the first bomb fell, the people finally gave the "police action" the proper name it deserved:

The Second Great War.

And the man who planted the seed of war and nurtured it fully now stood in one of the most influential positions in the world. The elected Chancellor of Public Health, Arthur Watts.

When Winter arrived at the base the day after the news began about the Third and Fourth assaults, she was beyond furious at her younger brother. When she came in that day, she was ready to run him through with her sabre for what he did, but instead, she opened her locker and found a folder case hidden amongst her belongings. When she opened it, she read a small note left by Weiss, hoping she had made the right choice in trusting her sister. She had spent the entire day reading over the files and felt disgusted at what the younger Schnee had found.

It was only after a very long thought process and mentally arguing with herself did she bring the files to General Ironwood's attention. While the timing could have been better, the sooner he knew, the better.

"Why though. All the pieces fit into place, except for the why," Ironwood traced the metal band just above his eyebrow. It was a small tell Winter discovered whenever he was thinking too hard or when he was stressed. "He wanted power, he organised an attack, and he assassinated his predecessor so that he could be elected by a vote of peers instead of a public vote; as mandated by the emergency policy during times of crisis. Then he starts telling everyone that complete control is the only way to ensure the safety of the people. A policy I hate to admit works if only in theory.

"With a nation behind him and popularity on his side, he forces the war into its final stages, where casualties will be at its highest. He knows that Weiss knows, that's why he sent her back out; hoping the problem will take care of itself. Not to mention that your brother is at his side constantly, probably as a hostage along with you." He ran his hands down his face and sighed heavily. "I hate looking at a chess board with missing pieces, it's more Ozpin's game than mine."
Pocketing the device that was still on, the General and Winter got out of the car and began to walk across the base to the offices. "Any word from him, sir?"

"Nothing, not a message, sighting or body to be seen. The man isn't even here and he still frustrates me."

They walked through the hallways, Winter limping as quickly as she could on her cane as they entered the office of General Ironwood, only to find it completely totalled. Papers and books were tossed about as well as personal effects scattered and scratched. At first, Winter thought someone had caught on already. Maybe their cancellation device was not effective anymore, and Watts's men tore the office apart looking for the evidence. A breeze caught a few pages and made them blow around the room, amending her earlier theory into someone left the window open, and judging by the black ball on his desk, a bird flew in.

Said black bird began to dance around his desk, its small claws tapping on the expensive wood under it as it cawed and flapped its wings around. If Winter did not know better, she would say the pest was laughing. Ironwood simply sighed heavily and hung his head. "Winter, if you could please get one of the sanitation personnel." With a nod, Winter turned and took a step to leave.

"Let her stay, Jimmy, I’m not going to say anything that’ll spill the beans," A frustratingly familiar, gravelly voice came from the room. Slowly turning, she saw Qrow Branwen sitting in the General's chair, his feet kicked on top of his desk and lounging like he owned the place. In one hand was his flask, in the other, a bottle from Ironwood's personal liqueur cabinet being emptied into that flask. Winter stared in disbelief; she had only looked away for two seconds and the man appeared out of thin air like he so aggravatingly often did.

"What are you doing here Qrow?" Ironwood nearly yelled.

The shabby man simply shrugged, "You always have the good stuff."

"QROW!"

"The board is set up," the man said as he got up and simply capped off his flask and downed the rest of the bottle with ease. "The last pieces are in place, we were just waiting on you." Qrow then pulled out the small file folder that held all the evidence that Weiss had collected. "Best find a better place for this than your locked desk drawer." Ironwood simply grabbed the papers out of his hand and shook his head.

"Do you have any idea how much I hate you?" he asked. The man just laughed as he walked towards the window, a slight stagger in his step.

"Just be thankful I can't crap on command. And bring the Ice Queen, she's always fun to have around." With nothing more to say, Qrow jumped out the window and vanished from sight. Winter was stunned into silence as Ironwood simply sat at his desk and pulled out his own flask to take a long drink from it. After a moment, Winter finally found her voice.

"What was that all about?" she asked as she limped to the window to try and find the man so she could shoot ice at him.

"I have no idea, but I suggest you pack your things."

"Sir?" She looked back to the General as he was reading one of the reports on his desk, her attention was quickly taken away from the sound of a loud horn blaring through the base from off in the distance where the naval docks were located. Hovering above the world, a dreadnaught was
armed and ready for war. The *Mantle of Responsibility* had just been outfitted with upgrades and getting ready to take off towards the Mistral front.

"We've got a war to end."

No! No this could not be happening, this was an impossible sight. Tyrian stood on the ridge overlooking the war zone, his eyes wide in disbelief as Arachne, his daughter, was slaughtered by that red cloaked *bitch*! He watched as her body flopped to the ground like a ragdoll and she was gone from this world. Falling to his knees, tears fell freely from his eyes as her body transformed from the perfection that she was to the living tide of darkness. He wept for the loss of the Ancient one but took solace that her suffering was short.

His grieving was short lived however when a voice spoke to him from behind. "Tyrian," He knew that voice, he worshipped it whenever he could and dreamed of it when he slept. Quickly shifting so he was still kneeling, he turned to his Queen behind him, only to find where her voice came from. A single Seer was floating before him, its long red tendrils tipped off with white claws, and fangs protruding from its dark, translucent head.

"My Queen!" he cried out in devotion.

"What has happened here?" her voice echoed through the floating Grimm. With each word she spoke, a yellow light grew and diminished with each syllable, "Tell me."

Of course, she knew, she always knew. Gathering his thoughts, he spoke quickly to not waste her time. "It was her, my Queen. The silver-eyed girl with the red cloak. The one who stole Cinder's eye! She killed her! She killed Arachne!" He cried out the name of his dead daughter as his hands went to his face, to cover his shame.

"Tyrian. It matters not if the Ancient One lived or not, what matters is that she is no longer hiding in Vacuo," Salem's devoted servant lowered his hands and looked up, "I will send Ash and Ember to collect the Relic. You, take care of the girl."

Joy soaring through his heart, he nodded quickly and got onto his feet with a quick jump. "Of course! Of course my Queen! Anything for you!" he promised with a maniacal grin on his face and his small, yellow eyes shining with malice.

"Take care of it. Don't disappoint me, Tyrian." With that, the Grimm made a series of disturbing clicking noises before floating away, off to move Grimm in the manner that she needs them to. Turning, he watched as the girl cloaked in red jumped onto a white Nevermore and flew off into the desert. Staring off, he gave a light chuckle as his tongue slipped out and licked his lips in anticipation and lust for bloodshed.

"Eye for an eye."

Chapter End Notes

So there we have it, another chapter down and this bonus was brought to you by Winter Schnee!
So I rushed to get this chapter done since the Destiny 2 Beta comes out today and I wanted to get something out so I don't feel bad for ignoring it a whole weekend, so there you go!

Also, we just hit 13,000 Hits! Woooo! I love all of you and thank you for coming back time and time again. It has been nearly a full year since the first poorly written chapter graced this site and every since then it has grown into something that I never thought possible. All thanks to the readers! Thank you so much for your support!

Thanks to StreetAngelJ for Editing, proofreading and general idea bouncer!

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo! Every one gets us closer to that first page! If you already left a Kudo, leave a comment! I love reading them and replying to them. This story is also posted on FF.net under the same name so if you read over there as well, come show your support for the series!

And as always, thank you for taking time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness!
The Mirror and The Reaper Pt: III

Chapter Notes

Welcome to the one-year anniversary of this story! If you've been here since the beginning then thank you so much for staying with me through all the darkness and angst. And if you've just discovered this story then welcome, I hope you are enjoying the series so far. My Angst train is like Hotel California, you can get on but you can never get off.

As a gift for everyone, I have prepared a double chapter adventure! I have combined Ruby's chapter with Weiss's to create a much longer chapter for everyone to enjoy, (As well as I couldn't think of much to make Weiss's chapter substantial.)

There is also something I wish to talk to everyone about at the end of the chapter so take the time to read that there.

And this is also the little warning to let you know that the following chapter has a scene of explicit sexual content, so reader be warned!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Mirror and The Reaper

Pt. III

A lone howl pierced the air, jolting Ruby awake. She had no idea when she fell asleep. Sitting on the ground, leaning on one knee, she lifted her head to gaze around her surroundings. Silver light shone through the small spaces between the slats of the wooden hatch that divided them from the horde that just waited outside. While once she would have tried to peek since the initial horde had passed; she could still feel the vibrations and the calls of slower, larger Grimm coming towards them.

Looking over, she saw Weiss sitting across from her with her battle plate sitting on the ground next to her. She was holding her side while staring up at the entrance to their safe haven. The wound was long healed, but the sticky red blood remained on her perfect pale skin and tinted her white hair a light pink near where she had injured it. Her weapon was within arms reach, and the same could be said for Ruby. In the back of her mind, she could hear the whispers coming; the Red Death calling: Get her. Kill her. End her. But Ruby knew that they needed to be quiet, or else they would both be dead.

Picking at the scabs on the inside of her right arm just for something to do, she counted the rotten wooden shelves again and sighed heavily. She needed a hit but did not want Weiss to drag her into an argument about it; again, bringing all the Grimm down on them. So she sat there while the whispers continued to get louder. Gritting her teeth, and shutting her eyes tightly, she tried to think of anything else... anything other than how red Weiss's blood was.

"Red,"
"It's red,"

"Such a lovely shade of red,"

"Shut up..."

"What?"

Opening her eyes, she saw Weiss looking at her, eyes narrowed in suspicion.

"Nothing," Ruby pushed her away and turned to the side, avoiding her gaze.

Weiss was silent for a while before speaking again. "You've been mumbling about something for a while now..." she cleared her throat and sighed deeply. "Do you want to talk about it?"

Her response was an immediate, "No!"

Weiss huffed lightly while pushing some soiled hair out of her face.

"Well, it's not like we have anything else to do..."

"No."

"Ruby..."

"I'm fine."

"No, you're not," Weiss raised her voice just a fraction, reminiscent of their time back in Beacon when Ruby would push her homework away in favour of playing a game with Yang or reading a book with Blake. "Ruby please, talk to me. What happened?"

The red cloaked woman thought about it. She thought of the fall of Vale, of watching Penny, Roman, and Pyrrha die right in front of her eyes; of Yang and the loss of her arm; of Blake abandoning them; and of Weiss being taken away... She remembered the day Jaune's mind broke and what few of her friends she had left began to drift away. Nora stopped talking and Ren tried to be as positive as he could in his condition. She remembered when the war was officially declared. She remembered the first time she killed a person.

And then she remembered the next, and the next, and the next. "I grew up," was Ruby’s seemingly emotionless response.

Another bout of familiar uncomfortable silence settled between them, as neither woman knew what to say to the other. The silence stretched on into unbearable measures. Ruby was still picking at the injection site on her arm while Weiss stared up at either the door or at her. Her pale blue eyes were staring deeply into Ruby’s soul. The Red Death continued to whisper in her mind; it seemed like there were five of them in her head, telling her to kill Specialist Schnee right now. She gritted her teeth, grabbed ahold of her hair, and pulled it roughly, hoping to let the pain cut through the fog in her mind.

"Ruby, are you sure you're okay?" Weiss looked over at her and slowly got up to walk towards her.

"I said I'm fine!" Ruby bit back as she took some deep breaths.

"Oh well, fine then; if you say so..." The Specialist folded her arms and stared down at her.

"Thank you," she replied, glad for this conversation to be over.
Weiss's shoulders just sagged and she sighed, "I was being facetious..."

"Well I don't have any food, so we're both shit out of luck."

"That...that's not what that means," Weiss sighed with a tired, defeated tone to her voice. "Please?"

"Why do you even care?!?" Ruby's voice cut through the still silence as she shot up to her feet to stare Weiss down. Although she meant the act to be symbolic at first; she found that she was actually looking significantly down at her. Ruby knew she had grown a bit over the last few years, but did not think it was that much. "Since when have you ever cared about me? All you cared about were your grades and that I was such a poor choice in a partner that you thought Ozpin made a mistake!" Her voice a harsh whisper to stop the Grimm from being drawn from the noise.

Weiss suddenly took a few steps back, her hands up in the air to show she meant no harm. "Ruby, please just think this through, if you make any more noise the Grimm will come and kill you too."

Ruby was about to retort with sarcasm about the fact that she already knew that when she followed Weiss's eyes. In her hands was Crescent Rose in the compact rifle form. Staring at her weapon, she did not even know when she grabbed it or even unfolded it to fire at the Specialist. A cold chill of fear and terror ran up her spine as she felt her finger curl around the trigger; her body simply moving of its own accord.

Her hand shook as she forced her finger off the trigger, the spring slowly moving back into place as her grip finally loosened; the weapon falling from her hands and into the dirt at her feet. She looked at her shaking hands as if they were not hers. Pain shot through her head as the Red Death screamed at her to kill her enemy, Ruby cried out and clutched her head and pulled at her hair, trying to anchor herself to reality as she began to hyperventilate.

Falling to her knees, tears dripped from her eyes as she tried to understand what was happening to her. Just as quickly as she fell, a pair of hands were on her shoulders. Looking up, she saw Weiss staring at her, wide eyed and with some sort of mix of worry and horror in her eyes. "Ruby, what's wrong?" she asked as she tried to see what was wrong. But she could not see, no one could see the darkness that lurks inside the mind. Ruby shook her head and grit her teeth. She tightened the grip on her hair to stop her hands from strangling Weiss. "Just talk to her."

She opened her eyes as her mother's voice broke through the screams of the Red Death. She looked up at Weiss and shook her head.

"Please Ruby, just say something. Anything."

"I don't know..." she croaked out, her voice rough from the crying and lack of water. "There's something inside me, and I don't know how to fight it; I just don't know anymore." She broke down into tears as Weiss wrapped her arms around her and held her close, fingers gently moving through her dirty hair and rubbing circles on her back trying to calm the crying girl. Just as she was beginning to calm down, she heard the sound of the wooden supports that held the ceiling up creaking as something large walked on top of their hiding spot.

Ruby instantly stopped her crying and they both held their breaths. She yelled at herself inside of her mind because of her crying; with all the negative emotions that flowed out of her just now, she had drawn the Grimm to them. The sound of careful sniffing filled the void as the steps grew closer and closer to the door while they tried to be as quiet as they possible. The silver light of the moon was blocked out as something approached the hatch and tried to find them, sniffing heavily...

Silver and cerulean eyes connected one last time; they both knew this was the end. There was not
enough room inside the cellar for Ruby to use her scythe and Weiss did not have enough Dust to make a barrier strong enough to last. With almost no Aura between the two of them, there was nothing they could do but wait.

"I guess this is it." Weiss lowered her gaze slowly as she spoke, sitting on her knees in front of the cloaked woman.

"I guess so." Ruby wiped her eyes and her nose on the sleeve of her shirt and took a deep breath, preparing herself for what was to come. Her attention was drawn away from her final thoughts when Weiss gently placed a hand on her own. In the darkness of the shadows, Ruby could barely see a light tint of pink gracing Weiss's features. She felt her throat tighten as blue eyes met hers once more and moved towards her. She was frozen in place as Weiss slowly inched closer and closer to her.

"Ruby," she whispered her name softly, so softly, "since we're going to die, I want to do one thing before the Grimm come barging in and kill us."

"What's that?" Ruby whispered back.

Instead of saying anything, Weiss continued to lean in slowly. Her free hand came up and gently brushed against her cheek, pushing her hair out of her face and cupping her head lightly. Weiss' touches set her skin on fire as she felt her hot breath on her face. Unprepared for what was happening, Ruby was startled when Weiss's lips pressed against her own. She felt the rough, dry lips move against hers as her eyes fluttered closed and she soaked in the sensation that overcame her.

Then something happened to Ruby. She could still hear the sounds around her, the scraping of claws on the wooden door, the hammering of her heart in her ears, but her mind was silent. The whispers of the Red Death died and the pleading calls of her mother faded. For the first time in so long, her mind was so silent it scared her. Had it always been this silent before everything happened?

Before long, Weiss pulled back and blinked a few times while she gently licked her lips, unsure if what she did was right or not.

Ruby looked her deeply in the eyes and quickly closed the gap between them, mashing her lips against Weiss's in an attempt to continue the silence that had enveloped her mind. Her hands came up to her smooth skin and slipped into her white hair. Neither of them cared as Ruby's fingers smeared the sticky blood that clung to the side of her head into her hair, dyeing even more of her platinum locks pink. Fingers gripped and found the tiara that held her ponytail in place and slipped it out, letting her hair fall as lips began to push and suck on each other.

As they kissed, hands were moving all over, feeling for any and all exposed skin they could find. She wanted to feel more, more of Weiss's skin. Her hands began to trail down her neck, the whispers the Red Death were silent and her fingers slipped harmlessly from her neck to the beautiful blue stone that was embedded into the clasp that held her blue shrug together and fumbled with it until it came undone. With it loosened, Ruby quickly slipped her fingers past the sheer fabric and touched the smooth skin under it.

She felt the moan escape Weiss's lips as the two of them finally pulled back for air for a few moments before diving back in. The sounds of the Grimm above them were gone; with all negative emotions gone, the beasts left to search for something else to occupy them, but neither woman noticed... Weiss let Ruby go for a moment to help the younger woman push the article of clothing off her shoulders and expose her bare arms. Coming back, the Specialist began to pull at the clip
that held her cloak in place and slipped that off her shoulders. Lost in the heat and the lust, clothing was hastily pulled at, each trying to expose more skin to the other.

The moment the strings of her corset were loosened and Weiss reached around to quickly unhook it, a rush of air filled her lungs as the pressure on her chest was suddenly undone and the taut muscles beneath it rapidly relaxed. Normally, Ruby undid her corset slowly to avoid this, but the woman that was pressing against her was running this show at the moment... A sudden rush of light headedness flooded her mind as she continued to feel up the sun kissed skin that belonged to someone who was once her enemy. She could feel scars of battles past, like landmarks on a map that told the story of Weiss Schnee, Specialist of the Atlas Military.

Weiss tossed the article of clothing to the side before they found each other again in the silver light of the shattered moon coming through the cracks of the cellar door. Weiss's skin shone in the light, a sight Ruby never thought was beautiful before but now it was all she could think of. Dexterous fingers pulled at the buttons that held the white blouse in place. The older woman nearly ripped it off her body before her fingers began tracing her skin, leaving flames wherever they touched. Her lips found her neck and Ruby was about to cry out from the sudden pleasure when a hand came over her mouth to silence her.

Ruby could hardly stay still as Weiss held her hand over her mouth to keep her from moaning and bringing attention back to their hiding place. Her fingers dug into the ground under her as Weiss continued her assault on her skin, trailing her lips and tongue down her body and forcing the simple military bra up and over her breasts, exposing them to the silver light and to the white haired beauty before her. Before Ruby could cover herself, Weiss's free hand came up and began to cup one of them. She traced the hardened nipple with her thumb and traced her lips across her chest before finally coming up to capture her lips once more.

Ruby could taste the salt of her sweat on Weiss's lips as a tongue invaded her mouth with a deepening kiss. Her legs began to kick as Weiss's fingers began to trace a tingling trail down her body, past her navel and slipping down into the hem of her skirt. With a sudden push from the woman in blue, Ruby fell onto her back as Weiss all but mounted her. Careful to keep muffling Ruby's noises with her lips, she cried out Weiss's name into her mouth as her fingers found the source of a throbbing heat that had been steadily increasing since they began.

The belts were pushed off and a warm hand slipped into the hem of her skirt and the underwear she was given. Fingers slipped through the small patch of hairs until they found the moistened folds, causing her to squirm and shift against her. Bucking her hips into the hand, she groaned into Weiss's mouth again as her body shivered at the contact. Sweat began to bead down her forehead, making her skin shine in the moonlight as the pressure continued to build inside of her.

The white-haired woman broke the deep kiss to breathe, causing the woman under her to whine at the loss of her lips. Fingers quickly changed to a moan as a finger invaded her body, forcing Weiss to slap her hand over Ruby's mouth once again. With her noises muffled, Weiss whispered into her ear for silence as she continued the rhythmic pumping of her fingers into her sex. Ruby reached out blindly and held onto the arm that was currently moving against her body, driving her closer and closer to a breaking point.

Like the flip of a switch, Ruby's body contorted and arched as she let out a muffled cry of pleasure. Her legs stretched out and trembled as Weiss continued her assault with her fingers, her lips quickly joining in as they pressed against her throat and nipped at her skin, forcing her to ride out the length of orgasm as her muscles tensed up then finally relaxed. Her body felt heavy as it fell onto the ground, her legs twitching slightly as she sucked in deep breaths once Weiss removed her hand from her mouth and her fingers slipped out of her sex.
Ruby tried to speak, but all that came out was incoherent murmurs as Weiss peppered her neck with kisses. "Sleep Ruby," her lover whispered to her. She could already feel her eyelids growing heavier, her blinks becoming longer as a chill ran through her body. Deep breaths calmed her beating heart, the tremors in her body finally subsiding as her body gave up resistance to consciousness. As her mind began to drift, there were no whispers to tempt her, no pleading to guilt her. Just silence, and for the first time in a long while, she dreamt of nothing.

Sun crept across the desert, shining through the cracked cellar door and attacking her closed eyes. Weiss inhaled sharply as she woke up with a start; sitting up quickly, she looked around her to confirm that she was alive. She felt her body, her heart still beat inside her chest and her lungs filled with the stale, muggy air around them. She was alive. She blew out a sigh of relief as she looked over and saw the discarded white blouse as well as the red and black corset.

Looking back behind her, she saw the bare, dirty back of Ruby as she slept soundly on her side. Her bra was still pushed up over her breasts as she slept soundly, curled up like a child. Shame and guilt flooded her mind. She took advantage of Ruby while she was having a mental breakdown right in front of her. She may have kissed her back, but that did not excuse her for what she did, even if she seemed to enjoy it. With a sigh, she gently grabbed the red, tattered cloak that belonged to Ruby and draped it over her, letting the young woman sleep.

Ruby clutched at the cloak and wrapped it around herself before falling onto her back and mumbling something. Weiss shook her head and tried her best to push the thoughts of what she did to the younger woman last night from her head, but they could not be settled. The sound of her voice and the way she called out her name was intoxicating in its own right, what began as the actions of a dying woman became something so much more, something she wished she could have done in a better life.

Leaning down, she gently brushed some of the dark, red tinted hair out of her face and whispered another apology for last night. Maybe once she woke up, they could talk about it like reasonable adults and work something out. She studied the woman for a few more moments before sighed deeply, still trying to process everything that happened over the last few days. From uncovering a secret plot, to fighting Ruby in a dying city, to fighting for survival from a monstrous Grimm, and their reconnection as partners under the threat of being killed at any moment.

While their night had been pleasurable on both fronts, Weiss could not help but to feel increasingly worried for Ruby the more she considered what had happened. While her muscles were strong in her arms and legs, she could feel the ribs just under the surface of her skin. Her cheeks had a slight hollow to them while her eyes had heavy bags and were sunken in slightly. Everything pointed to her not eating or sleeping right. Weiss could not help but feel that she was to blame for it. If only she had not simply broken under her father's will, maybe she could have prevented this somehow.

Alone with her thoughts, she looked over to the weapon that almost ended her life just a few hours ago. Gently, she picked up the red sniper scythe and looked it over. Her worry for the younger woman only grew as she saw a number of cuts and scratches on the weapon's form; marks that could easily be repaired were being dismissed. She turned and examined it further, finding sand and grit caught in places that should be clean, other pieces loose and plates that needed to be replaced.

From the number of times Ruby forced her to examine the weapon and from all the time she shoved ‘her sweetheart’ in Weiss’ face to show off some new modification; she easily found the switch to transform the weapon into rifle form and discovered more disrepair. The trigger and magazine latch were loose, parts dented and impacted that would have driven Ruby to the
maintenance room in a flurry of petals back at Beacon were present with no signs of being repaired anytime soon.

Opening the weapon fully, Weiss inspected the scythe blade and found it nicked and dulled in some parts. Weiss shook her head as her fingers carefully traced the once perfect object of Ruby's affection, realising it was now just a simple tool for killing. Just to be used and put away, the care and love were missing. Weiss stared at the mistreated weapon and shook her head. Things are so much worse than she thought if Ruby was ignoring the care and maintenance of her beloved Crescent Rose.

Her thoughts were pulled away when an arm suddenly shot out and grasped the shaft of the Scythe. Ruby stood next to her, a dangerous look on her face. She had pulled the bra back over her chest to cover herself. The next thing Weiss noticed was the creeping red veins running up and down her arm from a series of scabs in the crook of her elbow. Blue eyes widened as she saw the terrible thing that Ruby had been doing to herself. "Ruby..." she breathed as silver eyes tracked to where she was looking. Quickly, she yanked the weapon from Weiss's grasp and walked back to the pile of clothing and began to dress.

"Ruby, what is that?" she asked as Ruby buttoned up her white blouse quickly and got her corset back on.

"Nothing," she said in the same tone as she had used last night. As she tightened the laces, her posture adjusted itself to keep her spine straight when wielding a weapon like hers. Weiss was having none of it. She quickly grabbed Ruby's hand when she was trying to lace her bracers back on, only to yank it back roughly. Weiss was stunned by the look of murder in her eyes, like the person she was talking to was not Ruby anymore. It only lasted a second before Ruby gritted her teeth with a growl and shook her head.

"That's not nothing!" she all but shouted at her as Ruby double checked something in a pouch and put her belt back on.

"It's not your problem."

"What is your problem?!" Weiss yelled at her. She just continued to watch the woman before as she put her things back in order; slipping the cloak back over her shoulders and pinning in place with her emblem. Without looking back, Ruby ascended the stairs and opened the hatch just enough to look around before pushing it all the way open and stepping outside. Weiss was hot on her heels calling her name as she went. Finally, the red cloaked woman turned around and waited for Weiss to reach her, the dry winds making alabaster locks flow and the red cloak flutter around them.

"Ruby! Please! I just want to talk. You're not okay!" That earned a glare from Ruby as she just looked out to the desert and gritted her teeth. "I could feel your bones through your skin, you have bags under your eyes and you're doing things you've never done before. Just tell me what's wrong!"

"What, just because you fingered me you automatically care about me all of a sudden?"

"That's not-"

"NOTHING IS WRONG WITH ME!" Ruby bellowed out, causing Weiss to take a step back in surprise. "I am fighting! I am doing my job! It's all I can do!" Pain crossed her face as she held her head and shook slightly. It was more of the same from last night, she could hear Ruby mumbling something under her breath but could not make any of it out.

"Ruby-"
"SHUT UP!"

Weiss froze and stayed still as Ruby came back up and looked at her.

"Just, stay away from me." Her voice was weak and cracking, her gaze was looking past her, shifting from Weiss to something behind her. Weiss did not take her eyes off her former leader and wanted nothing but to just hold her and let her cry, but she was not sure if she was going to get hurt. Since trying to get her to let it out gently had not been working, Weiss tried a different tactic.

"Ruby Rose!" Weiss stood up straight and shouted at her. Ruby stopped and just looked at her. "You are better than this. You are a leader and a Huntress!"

"I'm not a Huntress!" Ruby shouted back, a terrified look in her silver eyes as she spread her hands out in front of her. "I've killed people, Weiss! Their blood is on my hands! I'm no better than a Grimm!" she cried out as she took a step backwards and shook her head, "I'm a monster, this war has turned me into a monster."

Weiss shook her head and quickly ran towards her and held her close. "No, Ruby. You're not," she told her as she squeezed her tightly, "This war has done terrible things to people, but it's not your fault. It's the White Fang. They started this war, they dressed up as Mistral soldiers and brought this war upon everyone." She pulled back and cupped Ruby's face gently, her thumb stroking her cheek; and stared into her silver eyes, "You did nothing wrong."

Weiss felt Ruby mirror her movements, her hands cupping her cheeks and she leaned into the movement. She stared into her silver eyes, lost in pools of colour. She did not feel when her strong hands slipped from her cheeks to her neck. Only when she felt thumbs press against her throat did she notice the change in Ruby's eyes, from soft mercury to hard steel. Weiss was afraid as her air was slowly cut off for just a moment before shaking hands were pried off. Ruby looked at her own hands in horror as she took a step back.

"Goodbye, Weiss..." and she was gone. The only thing left of her was a trail of floating red rose petals that flowed away in the breeze. Weiss caught one of them and ran her fingers along it; even Ruby’s petals felt wrong. What was once light and soft, was now greasy and grainy. She looked up to try and spot the woman, only to be greeted by the endless sands on all sides. Ruby was gone, there was nothing left for her here now.

Cutting her shrug into strips, she created a makeshift head wrap to keep the sun at bay as she slipped the battle plate back over her chest. With what little dust that remained, she used it to cool her body as she downed what little water was left in the canteen on her belt for the coming journey. With her weapon at her side, she checked the sun's location and started to head for the coast, but not before looking back at where Ruby ran off to one last time. Weiss gave a bittersweet smile as she remembered the smiling face of a Rose she once knew and silently wished her luck before she began her own trek through the unforgiving deserts of Vacuo.

Chapter End Notes

35 chapters and 1700 words later, they finally kiss.

I really hoped you enjoyed this chapter as an anniversary present it really does mean a lot to me to know people have been reading this story for an entire year and not grown bored of it yet. Even though all I do is angst and pain and stuff.
Onto the important news: Commissions!

A few people have asked me about this before and I thought I'd just share it with the people who haven't reached out to be to ask.

I don't do commissions, I have a well-paying job and advancing in a career that I like and I do this as a hobby and as something I like to do. And it's you guys who comment and say things that keep me coming back to produce chapter after chapter. Now some people wish they could do more than leaving a kudo and write a few lines saying their thoughts on a chapter, there is nothing wrong with that.

If you really want to support me into using your own personal money for something, go and find an artist or writer that need the money to eat or keep their bills paid. I'm fortunate enough that I make enough to eat and sleep in comfort while others are not. Go find them and just donate a little for them, it'll make their day as much as reading comments makes mine. Go find an artist and go commission your favourite scene from a story, it doesn't even have to be this story, just any think you love. Or even just tell your friends, say "Hey, have you read this shit yet? it's dark and it has drugs and sex in it and it's angsty as all hell! It's dope as shit!"
(I don't know if people actually say dope or it's a thing people say on tv...)

Big thanks to StreetAngelJ for taking the time out of his busy days to edit, proofread and general idea bouncing. Without him, this story would not be as fantastic as it would be otherwise.

On that note, I don't mind if you want to put in a few ideas for stories or concept that would sound really really cool. Tell me! I love talking about anything and everything.

With that done, if you enjoyed, leave a Kudo! We hit over 500 and we keep going strong! I hope to reach the front page of kudos by the end of it. If you already left a Kudo, leave a comment! Like I said before, I love talking to anyone and everyone about anything RWBY or general nerd stuff. This story is also posted on ff.net so if you read stuff there come show your support as well!

And as always, thank you for taking time out of your busy day to read my slice of madess!
The Nightshade Blade Pt:II

Chapter Notes

Oh this was a rough one, hopefully, everyone likes it. I expecting a number of angry messages...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Nightshade Blade

Pt. II

Blake stood frozen in place. Staring at the woman with golden hair and soft, lilac eyes. Knowing that it should be impossible that Yang was standing before her, and yet here she was like she just stepped out of her dreams. She saw the long duster jacket she wore, the side zipper was undone slightly to show off the orange top under the jacket. The sleeves were rolled up, right arm capped with bronze while her left arm had a leather bracer and her weapon around her wrist.

Blake fought for breath as they just stared at each other. This was wrong, so very wrong. Velvet had sent her out here to open the door for White Fang defectors, not Yang. Before she could say anything a woman walked up to her, blocking her view of Yang and breaking through the frozen lake that was her mind. Somewhere, she knew the dark skinned woman with mint green hair in front of her wearing a small, green jacket over her cream top that only covered her chest. Scarlet eyes looked at her with a questioning eyebrow. "You the one letting us in?" she asked in a whisper.

"Uh..." Blake tried to look around the woman in front of her to see if it really was Yang standing before her, not just a figment of her imagination, but she just stepped in her way and waited for an answer. She was here to open the door, which was exactly she did. Just whoever was supposed to be on the other side was wrong, in the back of her mind, Blake felt like she had just stepped into a trap that had been laid out in front of her. With a quick nod, she looked back at Yang, who had not moved from her spot.

"Good, then let's go," the woman said as she gestured to the faunus to lead the way. Blake suddenly became aware of the fact that she had left her bow off her head, leaving her faunus trait open for everyone to see. As Blake and Yang stared at each other, something took the blonde's attention. Following her gaze, Blake saw a short woman with brown and pink hair with white highlights. It was Neo! Roman's second in command. The same woman who stopped them from taking Roman down at the overpass; the same one on the posters she saw.

Neo had tapped Yang's arm and held a large, black bag to her. Yang nodded tightly and took it from the smaller woman and threw it over her shoulder. The look of shock and surprise was replaced by seething anger just bubbling beneath the surface of her perfect face. A hand on her shoulder tore her gaze off of Yang again to the dark skinned woman. She now remembered her as Emerald from Cinder's team from Mistral. The ones who were behind everything that happened at Vale. "You need to lead the way," she hissed at her. Blake looked back at the blonde brawler before nodding and leading the way through the checkpoint and onto the other side of it.

While they needed to be silent to make it through the checkpoint in order to make sure no one
caught them, the ensuing trip afterwards continued to stretch the silence into unbearable tension. The sun had begun to set and the trees began to glow as the sunset put everything in an amber filter. Blake's mind was a mess, thoughts of everything she was going to say to Yang all shrivelled up and forgotten; the words she did find were never enough, so she kept searching within herself. What was the point in reading all those novels if she could not even figure out what to say to someone that matters?

Taking a deep breath, she stopped and turned to face the woman she left so long ago and opened her mouth. "Yang-" The blonde woman simply walked up to her and shouldered checked her, knocking her aside to keep walking. The others stopped when Blake spoke and watched the interaction, but Yang continued to walk forward. Blake called out to her again as she jogged to catch up. Yang only seemed to pick up her pace until she called her name out one more time. Yang stopped, dropped the bag she was carrying and turned around.

"What do you want?" she asked. Her voice cut like glass. She had never seen such hatred boiling under Yang’s skin before, let alone pointed at her.

"I just want to talk to you!"

"Oh, now you want to talk?" Yang's voice was filled with condescending malice. "Well guess what, Blake. I don't want to listen to you." With that, she turned and picked up the bag and tried to continue forward, only for Blake to reach out and grab her wrist. Yang dropped the bag again and yanked her hand back, nearly pulling Blake with her with the force she used before shoving her one hand in the faunus' face with four fingers extended. "Four years, Blake! For four years, you could have come to Patch and said anything you wanted! You could count it on one hand." She added with a cruel imitation of her joking voice.

Blake could smell the alcohol on her breath, it came off of her like a perfume. The scent that she identified Yang with, the smell of the citrus and flowers that were in the shampoos she used in her golden locks were still there, only now it was being overpowered by the sharp scent of alcohol. Blake's heart began to crack as she realised what Yang had been doing for the last four years. Drinking herself into an early grave so she did not have to feel anything anymore. "I'm sorry-"

"You're sorry?" Yang's rage was on full display as she shook her head in disbelief. "Sorry doesn't cut it, Blake! Sorry doesn't bring my sister back to me! Sorry doesn't bring my arm back!" She held the stump out to show her. Her voice became darker as she took deep breaths from the screaming, "Sorry doesn't bring back the dead. Sorry doesn't give me back the life I lost." They were both quiet for a long moment, Yang lowered her head, she could not see her beautiful lilac eyes behind the curtain of gold. She almost missed Yang's voice as she spoke quietly. "Sorry won't fix me."

Tears fell from amber eyes and her jaw trembled as she tried to think of a response. She looked through every word and sentence in her mind to just try and fix her, but she knew nothing she could say could do that. "I'm so sorry..." She croaked out from a tight throat.

"Where were you?" Yang demanded. "Where were you when my dad died? Where you were every night when I would drink so much so I blacked out, just so I could stop hurting?"

"I needed to keep you safe..." Blake began. "Adam was still out there-"

"If Adam wanted me dead he could have walked into Patch and killed me no problem, someone almost did!" She shouted at her. "But you weren't there. Do you know who was? Them!" Yang pointed over Blake's shoulder. Turning, she saw Emerald and Neo standing off to the side, allowing this argument to continue. She could not read Emerald's expression, but she saw
uncertainty and worry in Neo's. "They showed up to save me, people who wanted to hurt and kill us came to me because they wanted me!"

"I want you!" Blake blurted out as she looked back at Yang.

"Then where were you!" She screamed back. "Was it because I'm not whole anymore? Because I'm broken?"

"No!"

"Then what was it, Blake?!

"It was all for you!" the faunus shouted back. "If I was anywhere near you, he would have hurt you, even more, to get at me! So I needed to get him first! You are nothing to him but everything to me!"

“Bullshit!” Yang screamed, “I was hurting! I needed you! And you just ran…” Yang’s voice dropped to a near whisper, “just like you always do.”

Blake’s voice hitched, “Yang… I never m-"

Yang’s voice rose to a conversational volume as she cut Blake off. “I thought after Mountain Glenn that you’d actually keep your promise to Weiss, to us,” Yang started to tear up. “Maybe if you had she wouldn’t have let herself be taken away, and Ruby wouldn’t have had her heart broken; maybe I would have actually recovered before I started drinking; everything could have been different…” Yang sniffled as a few tears fell before her anger resurfaced “It’s all your FUCKING FAULT, BLAKE!!!”

Before Blake knew what was happening, Yang’s eyes turned from lilac to crimson and her fist shot out suddenly. A shadow slipped off of Blake and took her place as she leapt backwards to narrowly avoid the punch to the face. Her shadow, on the other hand, was completely obliterated and shattered into pieces before fading away. With her fist still extended, Ember Celica opened up and formed around her fist as she lowered her arm and began to stalk towards her.

In flash of colour, Neo stood between them. Yang stopped in her tracks and looked down at the smaller woman, glaring at her for standing in her way. The tri coloured woman had her blade out and pointed at Blake’s throat, a cold hard glare in her dual toned eyes. Before anything could happen though, Yang put a hand on Neo’s shoulder and began to push her away. “No,” she all but growled, “She’s mine…” Neo sheathed the hidden blade and huffed lightly. She walked back to Emerald and folded her arms as Yang charged forward with her one fist at the ready.

Blake did not want to hurt Yang at all, so she was forced to dodge and block as best she could while rounds were fired from her gauntlets. Blake was forced to use the flat edge of Gambol Shroud’s bladed sheath to block a few rounds before leaping away to safety. "Stop running away!" Yang shouted as she gave chase. Just as Blake blocked another punch, she was suddenly caught off guard when her feet were kicked out from under her by Yang sweeping her leg. As she was falling, the angry red eyes of Yang met the terrified amber eyes of Blake as a golden fist knocked the air out of her lungs as she was punched onto the ground.

Bouncing off the ground, Blake rolled to her feet and held her sore chest; her Aura took the brunt of the hit, but it still hurt like hell. With only a moment of respite, Blake was forced to catch her breath quickly as Yang resumed her assault. One after another, punches and kicks were thrown at her, only for them to be blocked or dodged as quickly as they came. Forced up against a tree, Blake had nowhere to go when one more punch flew towards her.
With no other options, Blake used a shadow to throw Yang off balance. She could feel the heat coming off the golden steel of her weapon as she gripped her arm and twisted it enough to shift Yang's balance and leapt up to kick at her shoulder. With the momentum, Blake sailed through the air away from Yang as the blonde went face first into the hard wood of the tree she had just been pinned against moments ago. Slowly, Yang turned around with a dangerous look in her eyes. Reaching up, she pulled the zipper on her jacket down and tossed it to the side.

Under her jacket, Yang was wearing a small, orange tank top that showed off her toned stomach and generous amounts of cleavage, but that was not where Blake's eyes went to. Instead, they followed pitch black lines that were etched into her skin. Starting from the side of her stomach, she saw a dragon clawing its way under her shirt and down her shoulder. The beast's open maw was pointing towards the scarred stump of what was left of her arm. Blake saw the tightened skin that healed over the wound and felt disgusted with herself for letting it happen.

Blake's sensitive ears picked up the popping noise as Yang tilted her head to the side and stretched her shoulders out. Slowly, Blake watched as the dragon that was tattooed on her skin began to glow gold. Starting from the tail and working its way up, Blake watched as its eyes began to glow red and flames began to pour out of the mouth and cover the stump. "Are you paying attention, Blake?" Yang asked as she raised her stump as an arm began to form in the flames, "'Cause you're going to watch me burn."

With that, Yang charged at Blake, forcing the faunus woman to block everything the blonde threw at her. Doubling down on the defence, Blake was doing everything she could to avoid serious damage. The style of Yang's fighting changed to one she used back at Beacon, but it was more ferocious than before. Fuelled by her anger at Blake, she took care to leave extra space between herself and the flames of her arm when she used it. Blake held her blade out to block another punch with the flat side, pushing against it when the flames grabbed hold of the weapon.

Flaming fingers wrapped around the blade and pushed against her. Blake stood with wide eyes as she could not push past the flames, the arm was more than physical. As Blake pushed against her, she could feel the metal of her weapon start to heat up, burning the palm of her hand. Bringing her foot up, Blake kicked at Yang's stomach, launching her away from her as she hissed at the pain in her palm. No words were going to make Yang calm down, so she needed to fight back, if only for her own safety.

Yang recovered quickly and charged at her again, Ember Celica met Gambol Shroud as sparks flew out. Blake slipped her cleaver sheath off and held it in her hand to block the flaming arm that was coming in for another hit. They danced with each other, weapons and flames being blocked and countered one after another. Seeing an opportunity, Blake collapsed her weapon into its second form and held onto the ribbon as she threw the weapon out at Yang's feet.

With her ankles bound together, her balance suddenly shifted and she threw her arms out to try and stay standing, letting Blake grab ahold of her wrist and throw one leg over it. Bringing her other leg over, her heel connected to Yang's mouth and the momentum carried the blonde onto her back, her head bouncing off the ground. Gritting her teeth, Yang sat up quickly and grabbed the ribbon that was wrapped around her legs with her flame arm and shouted. The heat coming off of her body increased and the flames grew larger as she burned through the Dust infused ribbon.

Blake was now without her main weapon as Yang got to her feet. Eyes glowing red and her golden hair flaring out like flames. The faunus knew it was always a bad idea to fight Yang like this, any damage she did take would only come back twice as hard. Concentrating on what to do next, she watched Yang charge at her again like the hand to hand combat expert she was. Blake used a
stream of shadows to disorientate and dodge her stream of punches and kicks, finding openings to
do some damage herself.

Eventually, Yang caught on to what Blake was doing, so when she struck out with her fist, she
immediately turned to where Blake was going to be and threw her flames out to stop the counter.
Blake brought her cleaver sheath up to block the attack, but the flames hit her blade and slipped
past the metal to blow pure fire into Blake's face. She cried out as she was thrown back by the
surprise from the sudden change. Looking up, she saw Yang wavering, her Aura was running out,
and Blake was not doing much better.

Taking deep breaths, the raven-haired woman got ready for the next offensive as Yang stared at the
wavering flames of her arm. Her breaths came in deep and heavy as she concentrated on solidifying
the flames back into an arm and turned to face Blake once more. The dark haired woman sped off
towards Yang, knowing that this was going to be the end of the fight one way or another. As she
sprinted towards the brawler, she summoned another shadow as Yang brought her fist down and
connected with the clone. Wrapping her arms around Yang, she tackled her to the ground, only to
find the ground was much further down than previously thought.

With all her attention being pointed towards Yang and surviving her fury, Blake had not realised
when their fight had been taken to a hill nearby. Now, the two of them connected with the angled
ground and tumbled away from each other, while trying to avoid trees and large rocks that were on
the hill. Blake did not know how long she rolled for, but the ground eventually evened out and they
stopped rolling. Getting to her feet, she felt her Aura was drained completely. Small cuts were
bleeding from where small rocks and twigs hit her. Yang was not much better off.

She tried to get back to her feet, but her flaming arm winked from existence and she fell back onto
the ground. With a heavy groan, she made it to her feet and stumbled as she righted herself. With
only one arm, Blake rushed to her and wrapped her arms around her one more time, stopping any
more punches from coming. Holding her close, Yang tried to fight against her hold, but Blake
linked her fingers together to hinder any attempt for freedom. "Let me go!" Yang struggled through
grittled teeth.

"No!"

"Why do you even care!"

"Because I love you!"

" I HATE YOU! " Yang screamed into her faunus ears. Blake shook her head, no matter what, she
would never leave Yang alone ever again. Pain rocked her vision as the blonde quickly jerked her
head down and bashed her forehead against the top of Blake's, causing the faunus to stumble back
in pain. Before she could pull Yang close, she was decked across the face. She fought through the
pain and wrapped her arms around the Brawler's muscular core and took everything that was
dished out.

" I HATE YOU! " Yang screamed loudly as her fist connected with her kidneys with much less
force from their position. She kept screaming hatred at Blake as she threw punches and dropped
elbows onto her shoulder, trying to break away, but Blake held firm. No matter what happened,
Blake would never let go. A few more hits, Blake was not sure if her body was now numb from the
pain, or if Yang's strength was waning because her hits were becoming less and less intense.

"I need to hate you!" Yang pushed as much strained anger into her voice as her punches became
weaker. "I need to hate you..." Her voice waivered and Blake took the risk of looking up at her face.
She saw the angry red had disappeared into the soft lavender she knew. Yang took this opportunity
to deliver one more punch to the face before slamming her fist into Blake's chest. "I need to hate you!" She shouted once more as she hung her head and raised her fist one more time, only for it lazily hit her chest and slip off.

Yang did this a few more times before shaky knees gave out and she fell to the ground, Blake followed her to her knees quickly and wrapped her arms around Yang once more as the blonde began to cry loudly, letting her sorrow be heard. "Why can't I hate you..." she cried out and it made Blake start to cry as well. A single arm wrapped around her shoulders and held her close, warmth flooded her body as she clutched Yang and cried into her shoulder, her words failing her as she hoped her tears carried her message for her.

After a while, the two women separated and Blake looked into tear filled lilac eyes. Even bloodshot and tired, in the amber light of the sunset, they still took Blake's breath away. Gently, she cupped Yang's cheeks and stared into her eyes. Yang shook her head gently and reached up to take one of her hands, only to pull it away from her face. "I may not be able to hate you, but I won't forgive you that easily..." she spoke softly. Blake stared at her as her hand was freed and Yang slowly got to her feet and looked down at her. "And I can't give you what you want..." With that, Yang began to walk away.

Feeling her heart cracking, Blake watched in a numb shock as Yang turned her back to her and walked away and towards Emerald and Neo, who had shown up at some point while they were crying. Piece by piece, her heart fell apart as Neo began to walk towards Yang, her jacket folded in her arms. Holding it out, Yang took the jacket and tossed it over her shoulder, then reached out with her hand and cupped Neo's cheek, affectionately rubbing her thumb over her skin.

"Thanks, shortcake." Blake heard Yang's voice through her faunus ears and the last bit of her heart shattered in her chest. She was so lost and broken, she did not see Emerald walk up to her and extend a hand towards her. All Blake did was sit there and stare as Yang and Neo slipped their fingers together and walked back to where they had dropped the bags. Tears slipped down her face as she realised what had happened.

"Come on, it's getting dark. We need to keep going..." the dark skinned woman said softly.

"I lost the person I loved because I did what I though was right.." Blake numbly let her head lower, she stared at the palms of her hands, knowing that there was nothing she could do now.

Emerald nodded her head and spoke gently like she knew exactly what Blake was talking about. "Yeah...join the club."

Chapter End Notes

Welp, I did that.

Please direct all hate mail to 555 pls dont kill me St NE.

Thank you to StreetAngelJ for idea bouncing, proof reading and editing for this chapter.

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo, we're so close to page 1 I can almost taste it. If you already left a Kudo, leave a comment! I love reading them and replying to them when I can. This story is also posted of FF.net so if you read there come show your
support! I also love chatting over there as well so don't be shy!

As always, I thank you for taking time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness!
The Heart of Conflagration: Pt. II

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the lateness, hopefully, the length makes up for it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Heart of Conflagration

Pt. II

With a heavy sigh, Yang flopped onto the bed, her golden hair still damp from her shower. She stared at the ceiling as the soft sounds of rain pattering against the window of the hotel room harmonised seamlessly with the sounds of the shower behind a closed door. The image of Neo's petite, nude body with water running down the alluring curves of her form quickly appeared in her mind but only stayed for a few moments before fading away. To say she was exhausted would be an understatement, as much as she wanted to sleep, her mind continued to play back and process everything that had happened to her today.

Walking back to the bags after the fight with her former partner, hand in hand with Neo, Yang could not help but feel bad for Blake. Once upon a time, Yang had looked at her partner with feelings from her heart, a need to be closer than friends. Soft smiles and stolen glances had been shared between the two. But all that had changed after the Fall, after the abandonment, after the loss of everything. Yang Xiao Long was nothing if not loyal to those who are loyal to her, and Blake had broken that trust a long time ago.

By the time Blake and Emerald had made it back to her and Neo, the black haired faunus' beautiful amber eyes were bloodshot and puffy. Her makeup was smeared from where she had been crying and wiping her tears over and over again. Emerald gave the faunus woman a sympathetic glance when Blake gave a sniff and a throat clearing cough before speaking roughly, "This way..." The blonde's heart felt tight in her chest as Blake lead the way slowly through the heavy forests and humid air of Mistral.

In silence, they walked forwards towards the city of Mistral. Halfway there, they had entered a small camp as the sun dipped below the horizon and dark rain clouds began to float in, covering the shattered moon. Yang's blood ran cold when they stopped in front of two large vans and five people dressed in the uniforms of the White Fang. Yang's lungs began to squeeze the air out of her body; she tried to catch her breath but images of Adam's dark, grinning face filled her mind as she formed a fist, ready to fight her way out of there.

"What's going on?" a familiar voice called out. Looking over, she saw the form of her former schoolmate, Velvet, walking towards them. While she only knew a little about the girl, she saw her around the school grounds, never without her team. She was still wearing her brown and gold combat outfit from Beacon, but she had added a combat vest with pouches, grenades, and a holster for a handgun and a combat knife. The next thing Yang noticed was that her long ears were not so long anymore; one was cut in half while the other was broken and bent downwards. Lastly, she...
saw the three long scars that ran across her face.

"Where are the defectors?" the broken eared faunus asked as she looked at the three humans. Her chocolate eyes lingered on Yang's lack of an arm before turning back to Blake.

"We were lied to," Blake said tiredly.

"What?"

"There were no White Fang defectors, it was just them waiting for me."

"Strewth!" Velvet exclaimed loudly as she ran a hand through her brown hair. Emerald put her bag on the ground and took a step forward.

"To be fair, we are defectors. Just not from the White Fang." Emerald said out loud. Velvet inspected her carefully before a realisation hit her.

"You were on that team from Mistral, the ones who knocked us out of the festival..."

Emerald nodded sadly, "Yeah, we were part of Cinder's team..." She then sighed and looked around nervously. While Yang had heard this story before, this was the first time Blake or Velvet had heard it. "The four of us infiltrated your school, sabotaged everything, and led the Grimm and White Fang into the city. Causing the Fall. Then we ran supplies to White Fang members who were set up in Atlas, who committed acts of terrorism disguised as Mistral special forces and started this whole war. I couldn't be a part of that anymore, so I betrayed Cinder and began to feed intel to someone else."

Velvet stared at her as the implications settled in her mind. Before anything else popped up, Yang took a step forward and gestured around her. "Okay, can someone please explain to me what the hell is going on right now?" she asked rather loudly. "Why is the White Fang here and why have you been feeding them intel?" It was the rabbit faunus who stepped forward to explain everything to Yang, who needed answers or she was probably going to need Neo to calm her down somehow.

"We're not the White Fang," she began, "We are the Black Fang. We are a group of people who subvert and oppose the White Fang. We have been for about two years now; slowly picking apart the White Fang and those who supply them with intel and equipment. And now we know who has been giving us details on who secretly worked for them." Velvet nodded to Emerald who nodded back. "The only question now is why she would lie to us about this..."

"Who, exactly?" Yang asked. From the corner of her eye, she caught the nervous flicker of Blake's cat ears and her looking away. Before she could question it, a voice drew everyone's attention towards them. A woman with long black hair, whose face was hidden behind an ornate Grimm mask appeared. She wore a red and black kimono top with blood red gauntlets on her arms, a black skirt and thigh high boots that showed off her strong thighs. In her hand, a large circular tube filled to the brim with different coloured blades rested with the hilt at the ready. Flames erupted inside of Yang at the sight of her mother.

"Because we needed them here at any cost," Raven spoke as she shifted her gaze from Velvet to Yang. The blond felt Neo suddenly slip behind her, hiding from the woman. The mother and daughter stared at each other for a long time. The silence until it was finally broken by Raven. "It's good to see you again, Yang."

The anger of spending years searching for her, even to the point where she nearly got her sister and herself killed, exploded from inside of Yang. She went to sprint forward, aiming to drive her fist
into that mask, but was kept in place by Neo gripping her hand tightly, silently begging her not to fight her. "Fuck you!" Yang shouted at her. After a quick breath, she realised that she had almost no Aura left to fight her mother, making it a quick fight if it did happen.

"You know each other?" Velvet asked while looking between the livid blonde and the black haired woman.

"Hardly," Yang spoke through clenched teeth.

"I'm her mother,"

"You have NO right to call yourself that!" Yang shouted as she was held back once more by her girlfriend. "I had a mother! and you're not even close to her!" She could not see Raven’s expression behind the white and red mask. A silence filled the air in the aftermath of the quick back and forth between mother and daughter, stretching the awkwardness further and further. "I don't have time for this. Blake, come find me after you've calmed her down." She then curtly turned and slashed at the air with her sword. Creating a red-black portal before stepping through it, letting it close behind her, leaving the rest of them in silence.

Eventually, Velvet turned to face the three of them and pointed as she spoke, "So, I know why you two are here," she pointed to Yang’s travelling companion and her lover. "But, why are you here, Yang?" the rabbit faunus asked when the slender finger landed on the blonde brawler. What fury she still held onto faded at the thought of her baby sister, Ruby, alone in the world filled with war. A guilt filled void opened up in her chest; the very thought of Ruby getting hurt and not being there to protect her made her stomach churn as she spoke. Yang's voice carried a wave of exhaustion that was beginning to catch up to her.

"I'm looking for my sister, Ruby. She joined the VRA a few years ago and now Mistral might have some record about where she might be. It's the only lead I've got so far." She felt Neo squeeze her hand, her small presence comforting her.

A tired, defeated voice broke from Blake's mouth, "I know where Ruby is..." The cat faunus had been silent for a long while now; in fact, she seemed to be standing further away from the rest of the group. Blake avoided Yang's eyes as she stared at the ground, her hand coming across her body to awkwardly hold her arm.

"Where?"

"...Vacuo."

Yang had to take a few moments to process the information that her old partner had just told her, "Vacuo..." Blake nodded. "As in on the other side of the planet, Vacuo?" Another nod. Everyone flinched as with a frustrated scream, Yang's fist was wrenched from Neos’ fingers and went straight into the thing that was closest to her. That happened to be the back of one of the white vans that Velvet's group took to get there. "FUCK!" she screamed out as she punched the van again, putting a decent dent into the metal. She was about to punch it again when a hand wrapped around her bicep, stopping her from using her throbbing hand again.

"How the hell am I supposed to get to her now!" She wanted to cry; her fight with Blake and meeting her mother all in one day had pushed her to her limits. It was taking all of her control not to just break down in front of everyone right then and there. The only thing keeping her together right now was Neo gently rubbing small circles on her back. Taking deep breaths, she put her face in her hand and tried to hold herself together.
"Join us." Looking up from her hand, Yang saw Velvet standing in front of her. "Join the Black Fang, and we can help you get your sister."

"How exactly?" Yang asked. While she had her doubts, she was desperate for any solution.

"We're trying to end this war. Mistral and Atlas have agents in place that are actively stopping the war from ending. The faster we remove them, the faster the war ends and the faster EVERYONE goes home. Ruby included." Yang stared at the scarred woman in front of her, unsure if she should go through with it. On the one hand, she still would not be there to protect Ruby, but Velvet had a point. With no more fighting, there would be no reason for the armies and everyone could go home to loved ones.

"Fine." Yang drew to her full height and stared at Velvet, "There's nothing I won't do for her, but the moment this war is over, I'm gone." Velvet nodded and held a hand out to her, but quickly changed it to account for Yang's missing arm. A quick shake sealed the deal: Yang was now a part of the Black Fang, whatever that was, and was now trying to save Ruby by ending the Second Great War. Fan-fucking-tastic. "I really need a drink..." she mumbled as she took her flask out and downed a few gulps before capping it.

Yang looked over to the spot where her mother had been. So many questions began to fill her tired mind, but for now, she just wanted to rest. "So where are we going?" Yang asked as she wiped her mouth with the back of her hand.

"There's an old factory on the outskirts of the city, we're using that as our base at the moment. We'll take you there." Yang was about to head for the van she had damaged when Neo pulled at her sleeve. Stopping and looking at her, the smaller woman gave her a smile and a wink, the colour of her brown eye changing to white as she looked around a bit.

"We'll meet you there," Yang said as she slipped the flask into her pocket and took Neo's hand, their fingers interlacing with each other. The air around them cracked as reality shattered and broke around them like glass. The sudden need for vomiting rocked through her stomach and threatened to spill her insides outside. She had forgotten the feeling of Neo's teleportation had on her body, so she just clenched her eyes closed and took deep breaths. "Ugh...I'm never going to get used to that."

When the blonde finally opened her eyes, they were in the middle of an alleyway in a city. Judging from the style of the buildings and the native language that was written on the walls in spray paint and posters, she guessed they were inside the city of Mistral. With a tug of her hand, the smaller woman led Yang out of the alley and down the street. Changing her clothing as they walked, Neo donned her 'Nyx' mask (which was the one where she had green eyes and black hair in pigtails) and swung their connected hands happily.

"So, how do you teleport, exactly?" Yang asked as she took in the sights. Mistral was pretty this early in the night. Neo popped her scroll out of her inside jacket pocket and began to type into the chat log with her usual alacrity. Yang knew it was going to be a complicated answer, but she felt bad for not being able to understand Neo all the time. Eventually, their hands were parted when Neo passing the device over. Lilac eyes looked at the pink, brown and white scroll for the answer to her question.

"It's easy once you understand how perception defines what is reality and what isn't. I simply realise that where I am isn't where I'm supposed to be; that the me that is there is simply an illusion and the real me is elsewhere. I can use my Semblance to change everyone else’s perception of that illusion and when it shatters I am where I actually belong," Yang's already tired mind could hardly keep up with whatever Neo had typed. With a tired, confused look, she turned her attention to her lover and scrunched her eyebrows together. She just smiled and took the device back to add
onto her comment. "I perceive the world differently, therefore I'm able to do those things..."

Yang still did not change her confused look. "So, does that mean you're not actually here?" Neo rolled her eyes, grabbed Yang by the collar and pulled her down for a kiss. She was quick to kiss back, her hand running through one of her black pigtails. When they came up for air, Neo winked at her and began to walk, sashaying her hips along the way. "You know what, I'm not even going to bother trying to understand it. Whatever works. So where are we going, anyway?" Yang asked as they came up to a large apartment complex that looked far too expensive for normal people to afford.

"Safehouse"

Walking through the front doors, a few people who were milling around the lobby looked up and stared at them. While Neo seemed right at home, Yang felt a small pang of nervousness enter her stomach. She could feel their eyes on the stump of her arm, and she wanted to cover it up or something. She thought she was over the fact that it was usually the first thing people saw when they looked at her, but this was Mistral city, not a small town or her home. They walked into the elevator and Neo hit a button for one of the higher levels before the doors closed.

Approaching one of the doors, Neo brought her scroll out and tapped it against the lock and it slid into place. The smaller woman gripped the handle and paused, a look of uncertainty crossed her eyes as she just stood there, waiting for something. Yang placed her hand on her shoulder and gave a squeeze, the smaller woman looked back and smiled gently before nodding and taking a deep breath. She turned the handle and the two entered the safe house.

Inside, a layer of dust covered all the surfaces of the apartment. Neo turned on the lights and slipped into her usual colours, walking around slowly and taking in the sights. To Yang, it was a high-end apartment with many modern furnishings that had been untouched for a long time. Following her through the home, Neo walked into a bedroom and stared at the large bed. Like the rest of the house, it was all neat and orderly, nothing out of place save for the dust.

She walked over to a large sliding mirror and pushed it open to reveal an entire wardrobe filled with men's clothing, a familiar white coat standing out amongst them. Neo gently ran her hand down the sleeve and sighed deeply. A realisation hit Yang hard at that moment; to her and her friends, Roman Torchwick was an enemy, someone who threatened the lives of a lot of people. But to Neo, he was a friend and a loved one, and he was gone.

Not wanting to disturb her, Yang watched as the smaller woman sniffed a bit and let the coat go before bending over and pulling a large briefcase out of the closet. Setting it on the bed, a cloud of dust came up and Neo shook her head to clear the air. Opening it, Yang saw dozens of stacks of lien cards all neatly bundled up in large denominations. Neo pocketed a few stacks and then pulled a small vial of red Dust out and set it aside. Yang did not know what that was about and did not say anything about it.

When she was done, Neo closed the briefcase and set it next to the door before going back to the closet; coming back with small round box as well as a thinner case. Yang helped her carry these things to the front door before Neo went back and moved a painting that looked like it was stolen from a museum somewhere off the wall. Behind the painting was a bulky safe inside of the wall. Neo made quick work of the combination and collected its contents. Folders, scrolls and papers were taken out of the safe and tossed into the oven, where Neo racked the heat up and tossed the single vial of Dust into it, destroying its contents.

With everything finished, Yang held the long thin case in her hand as Neo picked up the circular box and the briefcase of money. Taking one last look around at the safe house, they left the
burning documents and went back down to the ground floor. Neo returned to her disguise and walked up to the manager. When he asked if there was something he could help them with, the smaller woman tossed the briefcase of money onto the counter and walked away.

The man seemed to know what this meant and just nodded and took the case into a room behind him. Silently, Yang followed Neo down the street to a fancy hotel where she paid for a room and was handed the key to a single room with a bathroom, mini fridge and a balcony that overlooked the city. Yang set the case with Neo's circular box and sighed heavily. "Shower?" she suggested. Neo nodded and they piled into the small bathroom where clothes were removed and water began to fall on their bodies.

While Neo was trailing fingers across her bare skin, trying to draw Yang into a heated kiss; instead, she laughed a bit and shook her head, "Not tonight, Shortcake. It's been a long day and I'm just exhausted." Neo pouted the way she always did but nodded nonetheless. The blonde understood why Neo was always pushing for sex. Without being able to talk, she could only convey her affection through physical means- not that Yang was complaining. The smaller woman helped wash her hair and having Neo's fingers running through her hair soothed her aching body. When she was finished, Yang dried off first, leaving the smaller woman to wash alone.

Lounging in just her pants and the orange tank top, she realised that it had started raining sometime while she was showering. Lost in her thoughts of recounting the day, she did not realise when the shower had stopped and Neo left the bathroom until a finger poked at her stomach. Jerking lightly, she saw Neo was wearing a different variation of her usual colours. While the black corset remained, the white jacket was pulled tighter across her chest, with a single button holding the clothing together over her bust, revealing ample cleavage both above and below where the button was.

Her pants had changed as well, the right leg was ripped at her waist and she had a small loop dangling from it allowing a long black thigh high sock to expose a lot of milky thigh. The sleeves of her jacket were rolled up in a similar fashion as Yang's with a long brown glove with two leather ties on her right arm while her left had had a smaller glove, completing the asymmetrical style she created for herself. She did notice something else that was changed that did not match her usual colours. She now wore a grey scarf tied around her neck.

When Yang noticed the scarf, the smile on Neo's face wavered slightly. She turned and walked over to the circular box and pulled the lid off. Yang watched as Neo pulled out a familiar black bowler hat with a red band around it. She stared at it for a few moments before spinning it around her finger and flipping it around in her hand in a feat of impressive dexterity before tossing it onto her head. With the outfit truly complete, Yang smiled and got up from the bed and kissed her gently, "I like the new look. Very sexy." The smaller woman smiled a bit more before poking Yang in the stomach once more with a raised eyebrow.

"Hungry?" Neo asked silently.

"Starved."

With that, they left the hotel room after Neo changed outfits to 'Nyx' once more so as to not draw attention to herself since she was wanted all over the world. Sharing an umbrella, it was easy to imagine how things could have turned out if things would have been different. With Yang holding the small pink umbrella since she was taller and Neo wrapping her arms around the muscular blonde's, it was so domestic. So natural, and Yang did not want it to stop.
They arrived at a twenty-four-hour restaurant and were seated in a booth. While anything could beat the rations they had to endure on their travels, and the towns they stopped in had great home cooked meals, nothing beat a steak from a chef in a busy city. Neo ordered chicken and a milkshake for them to share (Yang did the talking for obvious reasons). In the lull of waiting for their food, Yang caught Neo glancing around with a sad look on her face like she was playing memories from a different time.

"Hey, you alright?" Yang softly asked.

Neo nodded quickly, but then pulled her scroll out to type out her side of the conversation for Yang to read. "I'm okay, I just miss him."

"Roman?" The sad woman nodded. "I'm sorry...I guess you two were really close?"

"He was the first person who truly cared about and helped me get onto my feet when I was in a bad place. But I have you now, so it's not as bad anymore without him."

Yang's heart soared reading those words. "How long had you known him for?" Neo thought of the answer before answering on her scroll.

"A little over ten years, maybe?"

Yang read then and looked at the woman across the table. She eyed her up carefully before speaking. "How old are you?" Her only reply was a smirk and a wink. When the food got to their table, the sight of sizzling meat and fresh, steamed vegetables made her mouth water and her stomach grumble in anticipation. Just when she was about to dive in, the cold hard reality set in as she picked up her fork and her knife remained where it sat. Disappointment and anger at her own idiocy for forgetting about her disability made her want to scream.

Without skipping a beat, Neo pulled the plate towards her and began to surgically cut the steak into pieces for her in a few seconds before sliding it back. Yang took a deep breath and smiled gently as warmth filled her body. Reaching across, Yang slipped her fingers between Neo's and squeezed her hand, "Thank you, for everything you've ever done for me." Neo smiled back and gave the back of the brawler's hand a gentle kiss before they both began to eat in simple, domestic affection.

Chapter End Notes

And with that, yet another chapter comes to a close.

Neo's new outfit is inspired by a piece artwork of ADsoutoArt on Tumblr. I asked him if I could use that picture he made of Neo in my story and he said yes. Cool dude, go check his stuff out it's really good! Picture here

Big thanks to StreetAngelJ for always coming in the clutch for his editing, proofreading and just being an awesome person to bounce ideas with.

If you enjoyed, leave a Kudo! If you already did, leave a comment! I love reading them and I love replying to them! This story is also on FF.net, so if you read over there as well, come show your support!

And as always, thank you so much for taking time out of your busy days to read my
slice of madness!
The Mirror and The Reaper: Pt IV

Chapter Notes

AAAAHHHH! I'M SORRY! I'll explain everything after you read the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Mirror and The Reaper

Pt. IV

She did not know how long she had been walking for, as time seemed to stretch on forever. The hours had been blending together as Weiss continued to put one foot in front of the other just to keep moving. The simple momentum of her slow march was the only thing keeping her going, if she were to stop for anything, she doubted she would ever start again. As the sun stared down at her, she could feel the fair skin of her arms and shoulders burning under the hostile rays of light; her mind a whirlwind of thoughts and emotions.

Ruby. White Fang. Mistral. Grimm. Atlas. War. Those thoughts folding into each other and birthing new thoughts or ideas in her boiling mind. The makeshift headdress to keep the sun off of her worked for the most part, but for how long she had been out there, Weiss was beginning to have doubts if anything made sense anymore. Just to keep her mind focused on something, she began to replay the night with Ruby and her reactions in the morning:

The way she talked, how hard and cold she had become. How cold and hard her eyes had become from years of being thrown into this war. Weiss remembered how her lips tasted, rough and dry from the heat but tasted sweet somehow. The way her voice quietly called her name as her breaths became heavy. How calm she seemed when she finally slept. How she muttered under her breath and reacted to sights and sounds that Weiss could not see or hear. How she clutched her head and swore and screamed at Weiss, how scared she was of herself.

How the pupils of her silver eyes constricted to pins, how her thumbs rested on her windpipe. The small pressure cutting off her oxygen and causing her to panic. The look of pure terror in Ruby's face as she forced her hands free and ran. Then there were the lines in her arm, what on Remnant were they? Did they create some sort of combat enhancing injection that was being experimented with on their Huntsmen and Huntresses? And who was as she talking to under her breath? Did the VRA somehow acquire Atlas communications technology? Some sort relay perhaps? Maybe-

Weiss's over-thinking mind snapped back so fast she was sure she had mental whiplash as she fell onto the hot sands when her foot caught something and tripped her up. With a heavy groan, she used what little strength she had left and rolled over to look at the one item in the entire Vacuo desert that she could trip on. Sticking out of the ground was a grey item as big as the width of her hand. Quickly recognising it as an Atlesian canteen, Weiss quickly scurried to it on her hands and knees and pulled it free of the belt.

She had never thought hot water tasted so good in her life. The cheap, durable plastic tainted the
water with a terrible aftertaste but after the hours she spent marching through the sands, it might as well have been champagne to her. Weiss gulped down half the canteen as quickly as she could, only to cough some of it up when she tried to breathe. With her brain now hydrated, she had a chance to think like a normal person. Looking down at where the canteen was, she capped her only water supply and began to dig the sand away.

After a few moments, Weiss was staring at the dead body of an Atlesian soldier. How he had managed to show up here was beyond her, but as she reached into his chest plate to remove his dog tags, she saw a web of black veins just under his skin. Digging the body out more showed that there was a puncture wound on his back and his hands were tied behind him. Not only did this poor soldier die out here, but he was bound and executed by a very large injection that punched through his armour.

Taking the dog tags, Weiss set the man back down into the sand and stood up, her energy renewed by the water. Scanning the sands, she saw the look of stark white against the endless shades of orange that was the sand. Making her way towards it, she saw the helmet of another Atlas soldier half-buried in the sand half a kilometre away from the first. Like the first, he was killed by some sort of injection with his arms bound behind his back. With another body within eyeshot half buried in the sands, she began to follow the trail of death deeper into the sands.

Collecting the dog tags and the water canteens of the dead as she walked, she counted at least twenty bodies until she came to the large white walls of one of the Atlesian firebases that were scattered around the deserts. Taking her rapier out, she pressed up against the wall next to the large opened gate and peeked in slowly. The base looked like a horror movie, blood splattered the walls as bullet casings and bodies were scattered on the ground. Slowly making her way into the base, she checked her corners and secured the area before sheathing her weapon and taking a closer look at what happened here.

Inspecting the bodies, she saw most of them had deep slash wounds across the throat or face, making for a quick, messy death. A few others had the same puncture wounds with poison pumped into their veins. With everything Weiss had seen, she figured a group of people attacked the base during the night, killed a large number of people and took the ones who surrendered and made them walk out into the desert, where they were systematically executed with poison. What she did not understand was why.

Finding the communications room, it's personnel dead at their stations, she found a map to see where she was now. Firebase Fionna was the northernmost firebase that Atlas installed. Just a few kilometres outside of Vacuo city, it was used to monitor the movements of the Grimm that chose the destroyed capital as a new home. While Weiss wanted to believe that Grimm did this, there was no way. All the cuts were precision kills and a Deathstalker's tail would leave bigger holes in their victims.

Getting to the radio, she began to call out on all frequencies, hoping all the Atlesian forces had not completely pulled out yet. "This is Specialist Schnee at Firebase Fionna, does anyone read me? Over." She repeated her message for a few minutes, switching channels after waiting for a few seconds. Just before she gave up hope, static popped and a distorted voice echoed through the speakers.

"Specialist Schnee. Please confirm your identity."

"One-nine-one-four-one-five-two-three whiskey hotel India tango echo." Weiss told the operator her identification code and waited for the confirmation. After what felt like hours, the voice finally came back.
"Understood, Specialist. Sorry for the ID call, we had reports that you died during that FUBAR in Ritrr. Over"

"Well, I'm still alive. The only one at the base. Over"

"Firebase Fionna went dark a few days ago, we figured the Grimm got them. Over"

"No, but someone did. I need an evac here ASAP. Over"

"Understood Specialist. We'll send a Bullhead out to pick you up before we leave for Mistral. Assault Command out."

Relief flooded her body as she hung up the radio and took a deep breath. After all of the life-threatening moments she had experienced over the last two days, she was finally going home. As she waited for her ride out of the desert, Weiss collected the tags of the fallen so their families could know their fate. with a fist full of dog tags, Weiss waited as the sun began to set for the Bullhead to take her out of this place of death and chaos.

When her ride finally arrived just before sunset, Weiss hurried to the platform to get on but stopped when a lone person jumped out and landed in front of her. In full Atlesian battle plate and with a rifle in his hands, Alkmene Gift stood before her sporting a fresh, healing scar over where she bashed him over the head with her summoned Grimm in the alleyway, and he did not look pleased. Quickly reaching for her weapon, the man just aimed his rifle at her head and shook his head. "Not so fast, Schnee," he warned as Weiss only managed to get a few inches of her weapon out of its holster.

With a sharp gesture of his rifle, Weiss released her grip and let it slide back into place before putting her hands up. "You just don't know when to die, do you?" he said as he kept his aim on her. "Why are you here?" she demanded.

"To kill you, of course."

Weiss narrowed her eyes at the man. Thinking things over, she planned out how she was going to come out of this alive. She had no Dust to use, but held a fist full of dog tags that could be used as a distraction to close the distance. "My Aura could take a few rounds so I could run you through, Gift," Weiss warned as she was ready to enact her hasty plan.

"With that sunburn? I doubt you have much Arua left, sweet cheeks." He grinned at the idea of seeing through her bluff. "And sure, I might die, but can youfly a model five Bullhead?" he asked as he began to lower his weapon with a glint in his yellow-green eyes. No, Weiss did not know how to pilot a Bullhead, but there had to be an instruction manual in there somewhere, right? Besides, how hard could it be? Just as she was about to capitalise on him lowering his weapon he continued speaking. "Not only that but what about poor Whitley and Winter?"

Weiss stared at him with wide eyes as he just openly threatened her family. "What?"

"If I don't report back to the Chancellor on schedule, your family will die."

"You can't do that."

"No?" He seemed amused at the challenge. "We organised a massive terrorist attack in our own city and ignited the flames of war. What makes you think we can't make a few people disappear? Brother dearest is next to Watts nearly everyday, teaching the little one about all being a chancellor. After all, we're the ones who put everything in motion so the little shit can take
Dorado's place. Do you really think we didn't know he was smuggling Dust out of the kingdom? We let him do it 'cause it brings in the money that the embargo stops. Just imagine if a deal goes wrong and little Whitley takes the fall.

"And that beast of a woman, Winter. Do you really think her being behind a desk will keep her safe? We've got agents everywhere. Maybe the command building has a gas leak and explodes? Maybe she's confronted in an alleyway like you? Do you think she'll last as long as you did with that limp of hers? Or maybe her office becomes the target of a weapons test gone wrong. And let's not forget that little butler of yours. Sure, if they die, people would think something was up. But if your nameless butler dies, no one would bat an eye..."

Weiss gritted her teeth in anger as he began to walk towards her, daring her to kill him. She stared into his eyes and clenched her fist. "What do you want?" she asked, her voice just above an aggravated growl.

"Well, first, we needed you to die," he said as he stared into her eyes, "however, after recent events during the Fourth Assault in Mistral, your skills are better off being put to work rather than you dying." He then gripped her chin and brought his face closer to hers. She could smell the discounted mint of his toothpaste and see the lines of yellow in his green eyes. "So, play the good soldier, and everyone just might live to see the new world order."

Weiss jerked her face out of his hand and he laughed sadistically before getting back onto the Bullhead and starting the engines. As much as she hated this man for threatening her and her loved ones, she still needed to protect them. Following him onto the ship, she sat down in one of the hard plastic seats and took a deep breath as the Bullhead began to take off. As the firebase began to shrink in the distance, Weiss made her way to the cockpit and leaned in. "You never found where I hid the truth, did you." The cold, hard stare back was all she got back in return. "Well, it'd be a shame if I were to die before you found it, wouldn't it," Weiss said with a smugness in her voice as she took her seat as far back as she could.

At least now she knows they won't kill her in her sleep. She can only hope that Winter, Whitley, and Klein can hold on until she finds a way out of this mess.

Leaning back in the chair he had come to rest in after his long flight, Qrow stared out over the battlefield that was presented to him. He did not like his odds of winning, but he was going to do his best. Giving the order to his forces, Qrow watched and waited for the enemy to organise and attack back.

"Check," Ozpin said calmly as he moved his rook in place on the board, cornering Qrow’s king between the edge of the board and his bishop. The haggard man simply sighed and hung his head in defeat.

"Come on, Oz. Why won't you let me out of this place..." Qrow whined as he examined the board and tried to figure out how he could weasel his way out of this one. In all his years of knowing Ozpin, he had never won a single game of chess against the man. He always seemed to be one step ahead of everything, and not only in the sense of the game. No matter what it was, the headmaster of Beacon would always be right where he needed to be to offer some cryptic but often sage advice on something. Since coming back from Atlas to deliver Oz's message, he had been stuck here with little to do.

"Because, Qrow, we don't need your Semblance running wild and potentially ruining everything we've worked towards," the man in green offered in his usual calm manner as he sipped from his tin cup. The stubbled man sighed as he picked up his knight and blocked the check since it was the
only way he could get out of it, from what he saw.

"I know, but those are my nieces out there, and just sitting here doing nothing is driving me crazy since little crabby pants over there won't let me drink." He did not have to see her to know that Ceil shot him a hateful stare from behind her large scroll; filtering and organising all the information they were gathering about the war and all of their operatives inside of every faction around the world. Sitting in a small cabin playing chess was a far cry from how Qrow had found Ozpin after the events of Beacon.

After giving Ruby the hint to go to Mistral, Qrow flew off to meet her at the port, only she and her friends never arrived. As the days continued, worry began to set in for the old Huntsman. Retracing their steps, he found blood and two sets of tracks, both leading to opposite ends of the fallen city. Following the single track, he found the blond boy, clutching a broken sword in his hands, whispering about betrayers and false friends. Doubling back to follow the other set, he was horrified to see what had become of them.

A boy who had become a cripple, a girl who stopped talking, and his niece diving head first into a newly formed army to reclaim Vale from the Grimm. Everything was going to shit faster than anyone could have expected. He needed to find Ozpin. His only clue, like Ruby’s, was in Mistral. Leaving them, he made his way to Mistral to begin his search for the headmaster, only to come up with dead ends for the better part of a year, until he stumbled into a place that could hardly be called a town and overheard someone talking about some strange person who had shown up at a farm.

Deciding that it was better than anything else he had heard for a long time, he made his way to Pine ranch to see what was up. When he arrived, he walked past the gate and made his way to the main house when a kid, probably a little younger than Ruby, walked out the front door and stared at him with a surprised look on his face. Whoever the kid was, he beat Qrow to asking questions. "You're Qrow, aren't you," he asked as he stepped outside and sized the man up.

"How do you know that?" Qrow asked. The kid had brown hair and freckles on tanned skin. There was a shade of green Qrow had never seen before in his eyes. He wore a dirty white work shirt with dirty brown pants being held up by orange suspenders and orange work gloves over his hands with some kind of multicoloured scarf hanging out of his pocket. He looked the part of a farm hand; smelled like one too.

"Tall, greying hair, red eyes and smells like someone shot up the liquor store. A dusty old crow. Just the way he described you," Qrow narrowed his eyes at the young man and walked up the small set of stairs onto the front porch, towering over him with his height.

"He's here?"

The kid nodded and held the door open for him to walk inside. Entering the home, he saw pictures lining the walls of the family who lived on this ranch since before colour pictures and every generation that came after. He was led through the halls and into a large kitchen area where a kindly woman was humming to herself as she prepared some ham in a pan. Sitting at a large dining table, sipping on coffee like he always does, sat Ozpin in his green and black outfit.

Looking up, the white-haired man smiled and got out of his seat. "Ah, it's good to see you again, Qrow," he said nonchalantly like he was expecting him and as if he did not just spend an entire year searching for him, avoiding the newly established war zones to look for him. It took all of Qrow’s self-control not to punch him in his stupid, cryptic, all knowing face. "Do you have it?" he
asked as he extended his hand. Qrow just reached behind him and pulled the collapsed cane and set it in Ozpin's hand.

"Oh, who's this now?" The woman asked; much too cheerfully for Qrow's liking. Ozpin simply extended his cane and tapped it onto the ground.

"This is my colleague, Qrow," he introduced him to her.

"Oh! It's nice to meet you. I've heard all about you," she said with a wide smile.

"I hope not..." the crimson-eyed man muttered as he reached for his flask.

"Will you be joining us for lunch then, Mr Qrow?"

"No," Ozpin said politely. "And unfortunately, neither will I. Qrow and I have rather important matters to discuss on our way back. Thank you for putting me up and all the hospitality, Ms Pine. It has been a pleasure." He smiled at her and gave a slight tilt of his head before he shook her hand and thanked her for the coffee. Turning and leaving with him, Qrow followed him until they came up to the kid again. Ozpin placed a hand on his shoulder and smiled at him.

"I hope to see you again, Oscar. Maybe one day when the school has been rebuilt, I'll keep a seat open for you." The young man nodded and watched as the two adults left the house and began to walk down the path to leave the ranch.

"Who was that?" Qrow asked looking over his shoulder, back at the house.

"That young man will be me should choice and chance have anything to say about it." Qrow hated Ozpin's cryptic answers, but he had never been steered wrong by the man, so he decided to let it slide. "Tell me, Qrow, what has happened to the world in my absence."

Qrow sighed as he took a long swig of his flask before he began. "Atlas has declared war on Vacuo and Mistral with no signs of slowing down. Communications with the other headmasters are broken because of the CCTs are down and our forces are scattered to the winds with Grimm attacks at an all time high. All in all, everything's gone to shit, Oz." Qrow finished his explanation with another drink from his flask, finding some little comfort in the burn.

Ozpin seemed to take it in with stride before adjusting his shaded glasses on his nose. "Well, it seems like we've got our work cut out for us then. We'll have to contact Glynda and go from there."

His gut fell when Ozpin mentioned Glynda Goodwitch. He stopped in his tracks and downed the rest of his flask. Hearing that his companion had stopped walking, Ozpin turned and looked at him. "Qrow?"

Reaching into his pocket, the tired Huntsmen pulled out a pair of spectacles, one of the corrective lenses were cracked in three places. "I'm sorry, Oz." Qrow held Glynda's glasses out for Ozpin, who gently took them from his hand and stared down at them. Qrow could not read his expression, but he did not miss the way he rubbed his thumb along them. With a deep breath, he nodded and slipped them into his jacket. "I wasn't fast eno-"

"Did you do everything you could to save her?" Ozpin interrupted him, his voice hard and carrying the sharpness he saved only for when he was aggravated.

"Yes."

"Then there is nothing to be sorry about, old friend." The softness slipped back into his voice before he turned and looked up to the sky in time to see some birds fly over the shattered moon.
"Come, there is much to do."

The sound of a piece being moved brought Qrow out of his memories and back to the present. Ozpin had picked up his white knight and set it down on the board. Finally, his luck was changing, with his piece out of the way, Qrow could move his queen across the board and get the headmaster into check. This might be the first time he had ever done such a thing. Just as Ozpin pressed the horse piece onto the board, Ozpin's eyes widened and he stared out into the air.

Qrow had seen him do this a few times in the past, when he asked why he did that, Ozpin simply replied with "Reading the Tides" ; whatever the hell that meant. A few seconds passed and Ozpin finally blinked and looked back down at the board. Since his fingers never left the piece, he repositioned his knight onto a different space and stood up from the table. "Mate in three, better luck next time," was his only comment before walking across the small living room that was his little cabin in the woods.

A black and red portal opened up in front of Ozpin while Qrow was searching every possible way that Ozpin could call such a move. "Raven, we need to move now." While his composure remained like it always did, Qrow could hear the urgency in his voice.

Qrow's twin sister had barely stepped foot into the room when Ozpin spoke.

"Where?"

"Far,"

"We'll have to jump between portals,"

"No time," He replied as he produced a shard of red Dust for her to use. "We need to get there now."

"She'll know then," Raven said as she took the Dust and held it in her hand, it began to glow as she prepared a long-range portal.

"Then let this be the opening move..."

With another slash, the red and black portal opened up again and the two stepped through. Just as quickly as she returned, they had left. Qrow sighed as he studied the board again then looked over to Ciel, who was beginning to tap and drag several things across the Scroll board. "Can I have my flask back?"

"No."

"Spoilsport."

Qrow just flicked his black king over and folded his arms. He trusted Ozpin with his life, he just wished his was the only one at risk.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, first off, I'm really sorry for this late update. Things have been kinda rocky and
I just haven't felt like writing the last week. So I am very sorry for such a late update.

Secondly, we just hit the front page of Kudos! I wish I could thank someone but it was guests who pushed us to position 20. So thank you nameless soul who left a Kudo! I will forever thank you for making my dream come true!

Next chapter is a bonus chapter! And I think it'll be my darkest one to date, I can't wait for you guys to read it!

So if you enjoyed, leave a Kudo! If you already have, leave a comment! I love reading them and I love replying to them. This story is also posted on FF.net, so if you read there as well, show your support! I also have a Tumblr where I plan on using but I have no idea how to start with it so some help would be appreciated...
(AngryFaceWritings)

With that, thank you for taking time out of your busy days to read my slice of madess!
The Torn Stitch

Chapter Notes

Ooooohhh boy... What have I done... Go and find someone to hug after this cause those who are more emotional might need it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Torn Stitch

"You’re gonna be happy,” said life.

“But first I’ll make you strong.”

-Chavela Vargas

The door closed behind her and Velvet sighed deeply. Exhaustion lingered in each of her movements as she ran her hands down her face for a few moments to collect herself before shuffling deeper into her room. It was Arnab's idea for her to have a room separate from the rest of the team. Her own sanctuary where she could decompress, a place of her own where she could think and breathe. A place where she did not have to be Rabbit, the leader of a secret underground resistance that infiltrates and executes guerrilla operations against the White Fang.

Here, she could be Velvet Scarlatina; just a meek, shy young woman trying her best not to crack under the pressure. With another sigh, she clicked on the lamp that was next to the small bed she slept in. Tired hands worked her pistol out of its holster and tossed it onto the bed. Pulling the heavy zipper down, she tossed the combat vest onto the ground and stretched her tired muscles and bones. Setting her camera next to the lamp, she began to slip the rest of her clothing off, leaving her in only the tight fitting body suit she wore under everything.

Sitting on the bed, she double checked the pistol before slipping it under her pillow and moved to turn the lamp off for the night before her eye caught her camera. She stared at the small box and tensed her jaw before lowering her hand from the lamp and grabbing her weapon. She turned it over in her hands a few times before opening it and began to sort through the photos she had saved. Most of them were of Huntsmen and Huntresses in action, holding their weapons and using them like they were born with them in their hands.

A number of them were in greyscale, the colour faded from the picture when she had used them with her semblance. Flipping through the many photos, she finally came across the one she was looking for. It was of four people, her friends, the family she had found at Beacon. The team she was fated to be with when she was first hurled off a cliff side during initiation: Coco, Fox, and Yatsuhashi. Her teammates and the people she loved the most outside of her own family. They all stood around her, Coco with an arm around her, Fox with his arm on her other shoulder, and Yatsu standing behind them. They matched her own shy, embarrassed smile with brilliant ones of their own. Tears welled up in her chocolate eyes; she wished she could forget the last memory of her team, but she could not forget them like that. The memory of her team brought up thoughts of the darkest moment in her life, and she could not stop them.
The morning after the Fall of Vale everything was in complete chaos. Half the teachers were missing, people were panicking, and only a handful of fourth years were taking charge. People clung to each other in the aftermath of the bloodiest night since the Great War. Coco, sensing the dangers of what was to come, managed to persuade the fourth years into taking all the faunus families as far as they could away from Vale. It would only be a matter of time before everyone found out it was the White Fang who was behind the attack, then the lynching parties would start.

As discreetly as they could, three teams, including team CVFY, began to move the Faunus families through the woods and to an SDC train yard nearby. Finding a train was easy enough, and finding someone who could drive it was just as easy once they explained what was going on. Everyone was loaded up in the empty train cars and the tracks were changed so that they were headed to the lesser port cities to avoid attention until a boat could take them to the only safe place for the Faunus right now. Menagerie.

Walking down the length of the train, Velvet double checked to make sure the large sliding doors of the train cars were securely in place so no one accidentally fell out before meeting up with her team, who were standing by the last car to be closed. Running a hand through her hair, Velvet quickly looked around to see if they had missed anyone. The sooner they left, the further they would be from those looking to hurt them simply for being Faunus. "Is that everyone?" she asked with her accent.

"Just about," Coco said simply as she stared at the rabbit girl. Velvet looked around some more to see who they were missing, but the only people were a team of fourth years and the other team of second years. Looking back to her team, she saw that all three of them were looking at her. She looked at each of her teammates and wondered what was going on before it clicked in her mind. Her eyes widened and anxiety ripped through her body. "No."

"Velvet," Coco began.

"No!"

"Please, just-"

"I'm not leaving you guys!" Velvet called out as she looked at her team. Grim looks were on their faces as brunette walked forward and put her strong hands on the faunus' shoulders.

"Velvet sweetie, you need to get on the train." Her leader's voice was not giving an order, it was dripping with compassion. Velvet could see herself in the sunglasses as her eyes began to sting, tears building up as she shook her head.

"I can't leave you," she whispered while trying to stay strong.

"Velvet." Coco's stern voice forcing her to look up, her sunglasses slid down her nose so their eyes could connect. "We need to get you somewhere safe, as soon as the others figure out it was White Fang that attacked Vale, it's going to be open season for all faunus. And I refuse to see you hanging from a tree."

Velvet could feel the tremble in her strong hands, her jaw was tensed up and she was doing everything she could to stay strong while sending a teammate away. "Don't...." Velvet whispered as she tried not to break down completely. Coco removed her hands finally and pulled plenty of lien cards from her bag and forced them into Velvet's hands.
"Here, we pooled everything together and this should be enough to buy passage or bribe anyone you need to to get back home with everyone," Velvet had never seen this amount of money before, it was hard for her to hold all of it. "And if it's not enough, use these.” Coco then reached up and slipped her signature sunglasses off her face, folded them up and slipped them into the collar of Velvet's shirt and let them sit there.

"Coco, no. These are your glasses," the faunus quickly pocketed the money just to try and give Coco's glasses back. She never left the room without them, Velvet could count the number of times she had seen her leader without them on one hand; she usually slept with them next to her pillow, just in case. The woman just smirked and shook her head while pushing the hand away that was holding the glasses.

"Velvet, please. I'm Coco Adel. I snap my fingers and I get a new pair of glasses." She said with renewed confidence in her voice. To prove her point, she snapped her fingers and held her hand over her shoulder while never looking away from Velvet. With a shake of his head, Fox reached into his pocket and pulled out a pair of sunglasses for Coco, opened them and placed them in her waiting fingers. The woman just slipped them back onto her face like nothing was wrong and smirked. "See?"

The long eared faunus gave a chuckle before sniffing her nose, trying to clear away the tears that fell from her eyes. "Coco, please. You can't leave me," she begged. Coco just sighed and shook her head.

"Honey bunny, listen..." Her hand came up and scratched just under her chin. Instantly, all stress and anxiety slipped from her body and she moved into the touch. Coco always knew how to take care of her team, keeping everyone happy and determined to wake up every morning and do their best. Homework, test scores, and fight rankings, Coco made sure everyone had absolute trust in every member. "It's not about leaving you behind or sending you away. It's about protecting what we love." Her voice was quiet and calming, Velvet could not stop her eyes from closing.

Coco pulled her hand away and Velvet tried to follow it. "Yatsu," the leader called out as she took a step back. Velvet was still in an extremely relaxed position and did not notice when the massive form of Yatsuhashi appeared in front of her and picked her up, throwing her over his muscular shoulder and began to walk towards the train. Velvet began to scream and cry, telling him to put her down while pounding her fists against his back as she saw the blurred images of Coco and Fox standing there, watching her leave.

"Put me down Yatsu!" Velvet cried as she was carried to the opened train car, but he ignored her. Setting her down on shaky feet, she looked up at the man who took a knee in front of her and cupped her face. Velvet could not handle anymore, and she openly wept, sucking air in just to sob it out as her tears slipped down her face. The gentle giant simply wiped his thumb across her cheek to divert her sorrow as they looked into each other’s eyes. "Please, Yatsu. Don't do this."

"I'm sorry, Velvet," he said gently as he brought his other hand up and ran his fingers through her hair, over her ears that were pressed down against her head, "but Coco is right. It's not safe right now." She cried as she stood there, her hands balled into fists by her sides as she was comforted by the man in green. He eventually gripped her face with both hands and gently brought her forward to press his lips against her forehead, bringing another bout of uncontrollable sobbing.

"You ruined our date..." The shorter woman said between sobs. Yatsu just smiled slightly, she could see tears forming in his almond shaped eyes as he ran his fingers through her hair some, scratching at the base of her ears.

"I know, I'm sorry," he told her gently as he pressed his forehead against hers. "I'll make it up to
"Promise?"

"Promise. When this is all over, I'll come find you and we can have our date. Whatever you want," he whispered to her. Velvet just nodded against his head and took a deep breath, steeling herself for what was to come. Removing his hands from her hair, he cupped her face once more and pressed his lips against hers. It was gentle and overpowering at the same time, just like him. When he finally pulled back, he brushed his thumb against her bottom lip. Sighing gently, she took his scent in as he got to his feet, turned, and walked away.

She watched his muscular back for what felt like the last time. She did her best to commit him to her memory before he turned and gripped the handle of the train car door and slid it closed. Despite the car being loaded with two dozen other Faunus, she felt alone in the darkness.

Velvet set the camera back on the night stand and rested her arms on her legs as she held her head in her hands. She had not seen anyone from her team in years. With everything that happened, she moved from Vale to Mistral when they found out what was really going on. Determined to put an end to it, they left the home she had made for herself and made a home out of the organisation she formed with her own two hands. With a deep breath, she picked her camera up and flicked to the next photo, where a bunch of faunus kids were smiling the best they could considering what had just happened to them.

In the hours it took to go from the SDC train yard in Vale to the port town, Velvet had calmed down some with the help of some of the children in her car. They played simple games and she told them about all the adventures she went on with her team and her friends back at Beacon. Eventually, they arrived at the town and everyone was unloaded. The sun was almost blinding when they stepped out of the darkened train car. Everyone began to make their way to where the docks were, Velvet being one of them.

Velvet knew this town, this was where she was dropped off when she first started her journey to Beacon, this was where her parents lived with her brother. They decided to move here from Menagerie when Velvet had shown talent for being a Huntress, so they moved away from their larger family and picked a nice, quiet place to call home. Quickly making her way to the city centre, she saw a familiar pair of greying rabbit ears standing out in the crowd. Rushing forward, she found her family, looking as confused as the rest of the town's inhabitants.

"Dad!" Velvet called out as she came up to her family. Her father turned around and quickly rushed in to hug his daughter. He wore a simple shirt, his greying hair matching his ears. A thick moustache on his upper lip and a round stomach that just made his hugs even better.

"Velvet! What are you doing here, what in Remnant is going on?" he asked her as he looked into her eyes. Her mother came up next to her and hugged her as well. She was taller than her father, hair dyed brown to cover her age with a rabbit tail sticking out between her blue blouse and her dress. Velvet did her best to explain what had happened in Vale during the festival, and what the current plan was while she hugged her little brother, Cotton. Like her and her father, he was born with ears but with white hair instead of the brown of their mother.

Once she was done explaining, her family wasted no time in packing whatever they could and went to the docks to go back home. With so many people crowding around a large body of water, Velvet
was constantly surveying the area, looking for any sign of Grimm. As one of the ship captains was busy trying to call in other ships to help with the influx of people trying to get to safety, those with enhanced hearing suddenly looked to the sky, hearing something coming in the distance.

After a few moments, several bullheads came flying over the trees and hovered around the crowd. The doors opened and people began to drop onto the ground holding weapons and began to shout orders out at everyone. A few rounds were fired into the air and everyone started to move back to the town square, where a stage was set up and a man was standing in the middle of it, staring out at them. He wore a black outfit with a red shirt under it. In his hand, she saw a sword at his side. His deep red hair and bull horns marked him as Faunus, and the mask he wore over his eyes marked him as White Fang.

An order of silence was barked out and everyone quickly complied out of fear as the man on the stage began to walk up and down the length of the stage until everyone was silent. "Brothers and sisters! I am Adam Taurus, and I am here to bring you into our fold. You see, what happened in Vale is just the beginning, the White Fang is becoming a force to be reckoned with, to be feared and seen as more than just simple revolutionaries."

"Not since the Faunus War, have we been feared like this. We are on the cusp of worldwide revolution! Where we will never be treated as second class citizens, where we will never be afraid to leave our homes!"

"You forced us to leave!" a voice shouted next to her. With wide eyes, she looked over and saw her brother, Cotton, with his fist raised and an angry look on his face. He shouted out against the White Fang leader. Looking back she saw White Fang leader looking in their direction.

"What are you thinking?!" their mother angrily whispered as she yanked her brother by his collar, forcing him to lower his fist. Suddenly, White Fang goons were all around them, pushing people out of the way to find out who dared to speak out against Adam. Velvet quickly stood between her brother as the man on the stage jumped off and began to walk towards them. Eventually, people gave them space and a large open circle was formed around the Scarlatina family and White Fang members, Adam included.

Velvet stood between the man and her brother, but the bull faunus's gaze was still on her brother. "Do you have something to say?" he asked in a low voice. With all the attention on Cotton, he froze and shook his head, trying to take back what his impulsiveness had started. Gathering up what little courage she had, Velvet put her hand out and covered her brother just a little more.

"He's right," she said, doing her best to cover the shaking in her voice. Adam turned his covered gaze from the younger boy to her. "We were all happy in our homes, some of us were better off than others, but we were all happy with what we had. Then you attacked Vale! You brought Grimm onto the streets of our homes and razed the city. Now we have nothing! We were forced from our lives because we were in danger of being attacked because of you! You and your stupid organisation made every Faunus look like a terrorist! If you want someone to blame for how the world looks at us, look at yourself!"

Once she began talking, she could not stop. All the years of just keeping her head down and letting racist comments just brush off her or ignoring rude gestures from her peers came back from the deepest pit of her soul, bubbling with anger. When she was finished, she was taking deep breaths as she stared at the man before them, his hidden eyes staring deeply inside of her. He looked like he was thinking her words over in his mind, simply tilting his head and looking around gently. "Is that what you really think?" he asked her. Velvet just nodded and gulped down, foolishly hoping he would see reason.
A few moments of silence stretched out; she could feel her heart pounding against her ribcage as he turned and took a few steps away from her. Just as she let out a breath of relief, his voice rang out through silence, "Take them." Before Velvet could protest, a fist found her stomach and forced the air out of her lungs. Struggling for breath, she fell to her knees as her family was torn away from her by White Fang thugs. They cried out and pleaded for anyone to stop this madness, but no one moved a muscle.

A hand gripped her long, brown hair and yanked her head up to see what was happening. Her parents and her brother were positioned before Adam, his back still to Velvet. Each of them had fear and horror on their faces as they struggled against the people who grabbed them, holding them in place. "Let this be a lesson to everyone!" Adam called out as he began to walk around. "Only by coming together, under a single banner, can we force the Humans to see us as who we really are! Together we can protect everyone! Together we can achieve anything!"

He then walked up to Velvet and took her chin in his free hand, tilting her head so she was forced to look into his face. "And if you are not with us..." He let the unfinished statement linger as he stood up and walked up to her family. Velvet watched as he reached over and gripped the hilt of his blade and pulled it out, turned, and slid it back into place in less than a second, faster than she could register. "Then you are against us..." he snarled dangerously. Velvet's family stopped struggling against their captors, and their throats opened.

Crimson water slipped down their necks and stained their clothing as their eyes glazed over. Blood drained from their bodies as air couldn't get to their lungs. As one, the White Fang members who were holding them up released them and they fell to the ground like rag dolls. Velvet's eyes connected with her brother's, the blade did not cut all the way through his neck and so he was forced to live longer than their parents. His sister watched as his body began to convulse as he tried to live, his breaths coming in raspy bursts. He looked to his older sister for help, but she just stayed there in shock as he shook.

Then she watched the light fade from his hazel eyes, and his body was still. Bubbles formed in the pool of blood around his face as his last breath left his body, and the image was burned into her mind. Her whole family died in a single cut from Adam, she had lost everyone now. Empty, drained and tired, Velvet could not turn away from her brother's corpse as Adam walked up to her.

Instead, he leaned down and grabbed her face with his gloved hand. She could feel the pain on her face, but she was too much in shock to care about it. "No," he whispered to her, "No, you live with it." He released her face and walked away from her as another man walked up and pulled a large knife from his pocket. "This is the mark of shame! Of disgrace! For those who have abandoned their people, their own species in favour of compliance with those who had enslaved us before!"

While Adam talked, the man grabbed her face and pulled it close to him. He grinned darkly as he dug the tip of the blade into her forehead and began to drag it across her face. She tried to fight back but two large men grabbed her arms and held her head still as the man continued to disfigure her.

Once.

 Twice.

Three cuts were painfully dragged across her face, cutting her nose and opening her lips. She tasted blood on her tongue as she took deep breaths and tears stung her wounds. When it was over, the ones holding her tossed her to the ground as the man chuckled and licked the blood on the blade.
Curling in on herself, she sobbed uncontrollably. She wanted her parents back, she wanted Coco and Fox and Yatsu to come and help her like they always did. They were always there for her, and now no one was here for her. She was alone.

"Continue the recruitment," Adam's voice cut through the anguish in her mind. People began to bark orders, dragging people away from families as humans with faunus lovers and children were being beaten and separated from their loved ones. Across from her, chocolate eyes met lifeless hazel of her brother once more. She took a deep breath as the memories of them growing up together flooded her mind; seeing her baby brother for the first time when she was five, wrapped in blankets and making strange noises as his ears twitched at every noise around him.

The camera slipped from her hand and clanked onto the floor between her legs. She cried into her hands as the scars on her face flared in pain. She remembered that day, burned into her memory, never to be forgotten no matter how hard she tried. She cried into her hands as she traced the raised scars on her face, feeling where her Aura had coursed through her body, tinting the scars a rich brown as the dark chuckling echoed through her mind. With a cry of anguish, she got out of the bed and punched a wall, trying to use pain to stop her memories, but they refused to stop until she relived every moment of her darkest day.

Then, anger began to fill her body.

She knew anger, she could feel it whenever she used her semblance to channel Yang Xiao Long and her weapons, but it was not the blonde's taste of anger.

She knew fury, she could feel it whenever she wielded the hammer of Nora Valkyrie, but this taste was different, as different as it was the same.

She knew hatred, she felt it whenever she channelled the weapons of those who viewed her as an animal; people who thought she was worthless and a waste of their air... but this was tainted.

This was hers. Her anger. Her fury. Her hatred. Hers and hers alone.

All at once, her Aura exploded to life, sealing the bleeding wounds on her face and filling her with strength. Launching up to her feet, she screamed out as she tackled the man with the knife to the ground and pulled it from his hands. Mounting him, she took the blade in both of her hands and drove it down into his face as she screamed out. Over and over again, she drove the knife into his body as her anger was channelled into her arms, her mind only filled with fury and hatred. The sounds of gunfire rang out as people began to fight back against the White Fang, and Velvet joined in.

With the knife still in her hand, she slapped the camera weapon on her hips and activated her semblance. As White Fang charged towards her, she felt her Semblance fill her limbs, channelling the knife wielder from the festival; a woman with black hair and golden eyes. Her movements became fluid as she ducked under an attack and drove the knife into their chest. Summoning a hard light copy of another knife, she threw it into the head of another White Fang and kicked the throat of another, collapsing his airways.

The knife faded away and her fists were wrapped in light as a larger man came towards her. Hard light copies of Ember Celica were cocked as she punched into his chest. His chest exploded and a bloom of crimson shot out of him as he fell to the ground. All around her, people were fighting.
Members of the White Fang were quickly overwhelmed by the number of people who opposed them. Looking up, she saw a single bullhead flying off, Adam inside of it, looking over the chaos.

Throwing her arms out and discarding the mimicked gauntlets, she flicked her wrists and two machine pistols slipped into her palms with long blades coming down from the trigger guards. Her attention was drawn when four more White Fang charged at her with dust powered swords at the ready. Ducking under one, she sliced open the thigh of the first one as she spun into the centre of the team. As the man fell to his knee in pain, she dragged the hard light blade across the back of his neck and dropped him with ease.

Blocking a blade with one hand, she fired off a few rounds into her chest to drop the second. She kicked at the knee of the third and he fell down slightly as she rolled over his back. Digging the blades into his back, she used it as a platform to open fire into the last White Fang goon and filled him with five new holes in his chest. Pulling the blades from his back, the last White Fang she fought fell to the ground in a pool of blood as she returned her attention to the escaping murderer.

Screaming his name as she aimed up at him, she unloaded every round she could synthesise at the bullhead, trying to kill the man who killed her family right in front of her. The rounds bounced harmlessly off the metal of the ship, but one did find the White Fang goon that was standing next to him. His head jerked back as blood covered the left side of Adam. The man gritted his teeth and kicked the dead body out of the ship as it flew away from the town.

With their leader gone, the White Fang members who survived surrendered and tossed their weapons to the ground. People began to rush from person to person, helping to close wounds or stabilise people on the brink of death. The adrenaline wearing off left Velvet numb. She heard the sound of a man screaming out in anguish coming from her right. When she looked, she saw a tall man with pale skin clutching a child to his chest while another woman laid dead next to him. From what she saw, he looked Human, but his child and wife each had tall fox ears on top of their heads.

Looking back, Velvet walked towards where her own family lay dead. Falling to her knees, she lifted her brother in her arms and dragged a hand over his face. Closing his lifeless eyes and cradling his body, she let out a painful scream as she held him close to her and began to rock. Greif filled crying filled the air as everyone began to cry for loved ones lost in the few minutes of violence that broke out. She did not know how long she sat on the ground holding her brother when people began to yell out in anger.

Getting up, she walked up to people who were gathering around five members of White Fang who surrendered quickly; each of them had a gun pressed against their heads, each of the were pleading for their lives. Velvet stood next to the man who had lost his family and listened to what the members were saying.

"We're just like you! We joined because we had to! We would have been killed if we didn't!"

"YOU KILLED MY DAUGHTER!"

As a cry of approval echoed out for their deaths, they began to cry and plead for their lives. She quickly grabbed the gun out of the man's hand and fired it into the air, silencing everyone around them. Everyone looked at her, wondering what she was going to do.

"We must stop this!" she shouted out as she looked around at everyone. Hundreds of voices shouted at her for revenge and she shot into the air once more, silencing them. "Shut up!" she shouted as she walked past them and headed for the stage, speaking as she went. "The White Fang are nothing but cowards! Doing everything they can to instil fear and terror with everything they do! How many other people thought the same as us? Knowing that what the White Fang does is
terrible, but we did nothing about it!"

"Every single one of us ignored the White Fang when they turned from a protest group to terrorists! Instead of going out and stopping any of this from happening, we allowed it by simply hoping it would go away like everything else we find unpleasant! But it didn't and we can't ignore this anymore!" Velvet looked over everyone as she stood on top of the stage, all eyes were on her as she spoke.

"What should we do?" someone shouted at her.

"We fight them!" she shouted back, "For too long we stood by and let them do whatever they wanted! They killed people, destroyed homes and produced an image that no Faunus could be trusted, and we did nothing! Now, they are starting entire wars and forcibly conscripting people into their armies to fight for ideals that no longer apply to them! All the evidence was there and we did nothing! I did nothing." She saw the faces of everyone in the crowd, many Humans had come from their homes once the fighting was over and joined in helping anyone who was hurt or stood side by side with the Faunus as Velvet spoke.

"And I'm not alone! Both Human and Faunus have suffered from the hands of the White Fang, so now, we must stand together and stop them from doing this ever again! I will fight back against the White Fang; I have lost my home, my friends, my family because of them! And I know I'm not the only one. I have nothing left to lose, but those who do, get on those boats and live your lives. Find a safe place, and live. But I will fight!" A cheer came out for blood as people picked up the weapons of the fallen and began to organise into task groups. Almost everyone fled to safety, but those who remained showed no remorse for joining the fight.

Walking over to the captured White Fang members, Velvet cut the ties on their hands and held a pistol out to one of them, who took it carefully. "Are there any more recruitment things happening soon?" she asked. The man nodded as he took a deep breath. He was ready to fight against the people that forced him to fight for them, now it was time for revenge. Everyone got into cars and trucks, grabbing whatever weapons they could carry or find, and left the town, intending to stop the White Fang from doing this ever again.

This was the day the beast of the White Fang was infected. The disease that would kill it was born from bloodshed, and there was no stopping them.

The door to her room opened, and someone rushed to her side. She had slipped to the floor and pressed her knees to her forehead, wrapping her arms around her legs to try and make herself as small as possible, crying and sobbing as the face of her Cotton, dead and covered in blood, burned in her mind. Strong arms wrapped around her as she cried into whoever came into her room. "It's alright, Velvet. I've got you," Arnab whispered to her as he held her close. She cried into his shoulder as he rocked her gently, singing a lullaby he sang to his daughter when she was just little before the White Fang took her from him.

After a few minutes, she calmed down enough to breathe. With a nod, he helped her to her feet before she sat down on the bed and used the blanket to wipe her face. "Thanks, Arnab. You're my rock, you know."

He smiled at her and squeezed her shoulder lightly. "Not as much as you are ours, Velvet," he said softly.

She smiled at him and took a few more deep breaths before picking her camera up and setting it on
the nightstand once more. "Has Blake come back yet?"

The man shook his head as he looked around the office turned bedroom for their leader.

"No," he sighed lightly, "I think it has something to do with that blonde woman and the pink haired woman we picked up earlier." Velvet nodded, as she began to wonder where Blake could have gone when they first got back to base. She said she was looking into something, but left before anyone could question her. Before she could think about it anymore, the supporting hand was on her shoulder once more. "Get some rest Velvet, we can worry about that tomorrow."

She nodded and reached over to the lamp and turned it off. Slipping under the blanket, Arnab closed the door, and she was left alone in darkness once more.

Chapter End Notes

I am so so sorry. Please, for the love of all God, if you need help go and find it! I was actually crying when I wrote this! ME! Of all people, had to stop writing it so I could clear the tears from my eyes while writing this.

So this is the darkest chapter I had planned so far. Other's might come close to this one, but this will always hold a place in my broken, blackened heart.

Big thanks to StreetAngelJ for powering through this for editing and proofreading as well as idea bouncing.

If you enjoyed this chapter, please leave a Kudo! If you already have, leave a comment, I love replying to them and I love talking about anything RWBY or anything really. This story is also posted on FF.net under the same name. So if you read it there as well, show your support! I also have a Tumblr (Angryfacewritings) That I have no idea how to use so please help me...

And as always, thank you for taking time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness.
She could feel the weight of the sun pressing against her body, each step harder than the last. Her lips were dry and cracked; she could taste the faint hints of copper from the blood coming from the open sores on her lips the heat had created. There was no hiding from the heat of the desert in the day. Even with the hood of her cloak drawn up over her head, she felt the full blast of the fiery ball of anger that hung in the sky. She had stopped sweating a while ago, thirst and hunger were gnawing at her body, tempting her to give in, lay down and die.

She could feel the weight of her weapon sitting on her hips; what ammunition she had left added to it. She was tempted to discard them, lessen the load and walk further, but she kept them. They were the tools of her deathly art, her brush to paint the endless shades of vermillion. Ruby marched forward, step by step, inch by inch. She continued her slow march to the enemy, wherever they may be. Atlas. Atlas was the enemy. Atlas had specialists, like Weiss.

Weiss.

Just the idea of her brought her back to last night. The way her hands danced across her skin, how her lips made her mind silent. How beautiful that silence was as the woman with snow white hair and perfect, sapphire eyes played with her body. Ruby had never felt like that before, she could barely describe the idea of what she felt that night before blissful unconsciousness claimed afterwards. But when the morning came, so too did the whispers and the inky red lines that wrapped around her mind, tighter than before.

Taking a quick glance up in front of her to see if she saw anything, she saw something that seemed impossible. Out in the distance in front of her was the Red Death, walking towards her. All around her were red petals, flowing and turning, pushing and pulling, flying and falling like a swarm of locusts looking for a feast. Ruby stopped and blinked a few times, to make sure what she was seeing was real. The Red Death never left her dreams; but now, she was here.

Stopping, Ruby turned to the right and was about to begin her march anew, when she looked forward and saw the Red Death was closer now. On the right side of her face, blood dripped down pale skin, her black and silver eyes tore holes into her soul as she walked like a woman scorned. The petal storm surrounding her never ceasing as she moved ever closer to her. Ruby stared, wide eyed and scared as she turned back to escape her, only to meet the Red Death standing in front of her.

They stared at each other, neither moving as the petal storm now encompassing the two of them. Ruby tried to look away, lowering her head and blocking her eyes with her hood. The Red Death was having none of it from her. She threw the hood off her head and grabbed her hair, making Ruby cry out in pain as she was forced to move her face closer. She could smell the blood on her breath; the thick, rotting soup fell from her lips as she opened her mouth to speak.

"What are you doing?" Her voice was low, almost like a garbled growl. She bore her bloodied
teeth; hatred and anger flowed from her voice. "You had her, her throat was in your hands! The enemy was laid out in front of you and you ran away! WHY!" the Red Death demanded as she pulled Ruby's hair more. She cried out as she tried to pull away, pushing against her chest. Her clothes were soaked with crimson but her grip never faltered.

"I didn't want to hurt her!" Ruby yelled out as she tried to get away.

"SHE IS THE ENEMY!" the Red Death shouted at her. With a yell, Ruby threw her fist up and punched the Red Death in the face. Stumbling back, The Red Death held her face and growled as Ruby got as far away as she could. Reaching behind her, she pulled Crescent Rose from its holster and unfolded it into its rifle form and aimed at the dark reflection of herself. When she recovered, the Red Death shook her head. "You really going to kill me, Ruby?" she asked as she began to walk towards her, leaving a trail of stained petals in the sands.

"You are nothing without me. I guided you, protected you. Without me, you would have died that day when the transport got shot out of the sky. Just another tick on someone's chart when they're counting the dead, but you lived."

"I killed people!" Ruby shouted, taking a few steps back to try and keep the space between them.

"You survived!" the Red Death bellowed out as she jumped forward and grabbed the weapon, pushing it so the muzzle was not pointed at her anymore. The sudden leap startled Ruby and the weapon went off, sending a round into the sand. "Why are you fighting me so much?" she asked as she gripped the Huntress's weapon in a blood-stained grip. Ruby fought to keep the weapon in her hands as they stared at each other; the weapon shaking between the two of them as they fought for control.

"It's her, isn't it..." the Red Death whispered as the epiphany came to her. "Ever since you saw her when we first got here, you've done nothing but fight me every chance you got!" It was true. Meeting Weiss in the outskirts of Ritrr, the bombed out city, for the first time in so many years brought back memories that she thought were buried so deep within her but were now coming back with full force; making her question herself over and over again. Ruby ripped the weapon from the Red Death's hands and stepped back.

"Don't even think about touching her," Ruby warned as she glared at the Red Death. The bloody woman shook her head and walked forward again.

"Weiss is from Atlas, Atlas is the enemy, Ruby." Her voice still held the garbled growl she always had, but it had grown softer. "How many people has Atlas killed in the name of peace? Thousands? Millions? How many more will die because of them? How many people has she killed in their name?" Ruby did not want to think about that, but she had seen it with her own eyes. The white haired woman's rapier, Myrtenaster, was tipped in blood, dripping crimson into the sands not unlike what the Red Death is doing now.

"She would have killed you too, given the chance..." The dark whispers entered her ear, she could feel the hot breath on her skin as Ruby wavered slightly. "You are her enemy, and she is yours. One of all, all is your enemy..." Ruby saw the bloodied hand snake down her arm, leaving a smear against the stained white sleeve as she reached towards the weapon in her hands. "The world is your enemy, and we will paint it..." Her hand wrapped around the stock and began to slip it out of Ruby's fingers.

"Red like roses..." Ruby whispered lightly as the weapon slowly slipped away from her.

"Ruby!"
The young woman's mind snapped into focus and she gripped Crescent Rose tightly, grabbing it out of the Red Death's hands. She glared at her dark reflection before looking over at her mother, who stood a few feet away. Ruby turned her gaze away from her, she did not want her mother to see her like this. She had fallen so far from what her mother stood for, what Ruby wanted to become. She was supposed to be a Huntress, now she's a soldier. A killer.

"The loving mother returns..." the Red Death said with a grand gesture with her arms. "Come to guilt your daughter once again?" Ruby looked up as the two stared each other down. Summer's gaze shifted from the bloodied woman to Ruby, giving her another sympathetic look. Worry and love emanated from her eyes. Ruby just looked away and sighed heavily. "Look what you do to her. She can barely stand to look at you, and all you do is stare and judge."

"I worry for my daughter," her mother finally acknowledged the Red Death, "you have been poisoning her since the beginning."

"I have been saving her!" she shouted back.

"You need to stop using the stimulant, it's ruining you!" Summer Rose pushed past the Red Death and walked up to her daughter. Ruby just looked up at her and shook her head.

"I need it to fight..."

"She needs it to survive!" the Red Death shouted back as Ruby could feel the shaking coming. She needed another hit. Reaching into her pouch, her fingers traced the glass vial before taking it out slowly. Looking down at it in her hand, she watched as the milky white fluid moved around its container. Whatever the serum was, it restored her Aura without the need for rest or food.

"Aura is the manifestation of your soul. A healthy soul lies in a healthy mind and healthy body." Her mother walked up and grabbed her wrist, pulling the substance away from her face.

"This removes the need," the Red Death replied as she grabbed Summer's wrist and yanked it back, releasing Ruby of her grasp. "Rest and food takes too long. There is a war to win and people to kill..." Her dark reflection took her hand and made her wrap her fingers around the vial, making sure Ruby kept it safe. Suddenly, the Red Death and Summer Rose looked over to the side in unison. Looking in that same direction, she saw nothing but a sand dune next to them.

"The enemy comes..." was the only warning the Red Death gave.

Quickly, Ruby shoved the vial of Aura Stimulant back into the pouch as she took her weapon in both hands and backed away from the dune directly next to her. Several moments stretched out. Ruby was beginning to have second thoughts about listening to figments of her imagination when someone jumped off the sand dune and flew over her. Their arms were extended and she reacted to the threat by spinning her weapon open into the scythe mode and narrowly preventing a hail of bullets from hitting her.

As soon as they landed, she was immediately charged at. Blocking sharp jabs with her weapon, she was backed into the dune they had jumped off of. Barely dodging another punch, the hand disappeared into the sand and Ruby kicked out and kicked her attacker's stomach, pushing off and granting her some space to swing her weapon. She managed to connect a slash but was blocked by the strange weapons on their wrists. Quickly, Ruby jumped away and aimed the muzzle of her weapon at her assailant. With no one moving, she finally took in who was attacking her out of the blue.

The man was wearing a long brown jacket that was opened to expose a scarred chest. On his wrists were twin blades and she figured there was some sort of firearm function built in based on how he
opened with his ambush. He had a long, pale face with small, golden eyes that felt like they were passing through her. Over his shoulder was his brown ponytail tied into a neat braid, silver rings pierced his ears with a third in the top of his left one. Knee high boots with knee guards, white pants and a thick leather belt around his waist completed the outfit, but his smile unnerved her the most.

Suddenly, the man broke into a fit of laughter, holding his face as he tried to contain his giggles. Ruby just looked at him oddly as he took a breath to calm himself. "My my!" he began as he stood up straight and began to strut and gesture around with pompous grandeur. "Here I was, out on an afternoon stroll when I run into the rare desert rose..." he giggled lightly with a manic grin.

"Who are you?" Ruby called out as she gripped her weapon and kept her aim on the man. The man just stared at her with wide eyes for a second before succumbing to another fit of maniacal laughter, even going so far as to double over for a moment before coming back up for air.

"You, you haven't the slightest clue, do you? Oh, how exciting this must be." He gleefully placed a hand on his face and looked at her with disbelief. "Who I am matters not to you, but what kind of man would I be if I denied someone's last wish..." With a theatrical bow, he introduced himself, "I, am Tyrian Callows. And I live for your death." His smile turned maniacal and his eyes widened, honing in on his target. The blades on his wrists came to life just before he charged forward in a fit of sudden speed.

Ruby was forced onto the defence as he came in at every angle he could. Slashes, punches and kicks assualted her from all sides. He dashed around her with a wicked grin as she did everything she could to block each attack, but she was quickly overwhelmed. As she dodged a kick, she tried to counter with a swing of her scythe, but he bent back in an impossible angle to let the scythe pass over him harmlessly. As he came back up, he launched out with a slash and knocked her onto her back several feet away. Quickly rolling back to her feet, she just barely blocked a launched kick that sent her flying once again.

Before she could get back to her feet, Tyrian ran up and connected his foot to her stomach with a powerful kick; destroying what little remained of her Aura and sending her flying away with her weapon just out of arm’s reach. Trying to catch her breath, Ruby turned onto her stomach and crawled to her weapon as the man began laughing at her once again. "Really? Is this the best you can do?" he asked as he began to casually walk towards her; taking his time as she used her weapon to bring herself to her knees.

"To think it was you who ruined Cinder and killed my daughter..." He stopped short and stared down at her with a dark look in his eyes.

"Who?" Ruby asked as she took deep breaths, causing her ribs and muscles to protest painfully with each breath.

"ARACHNE!" he shouted at her. Ruby flinched from the yell and covered her eyes as the man kicked sand in her face. "You killed her just after her birth! She was supposed to spawn the heralds of the Queen! Now she rots in the city from the wounds you and your armies did to her!" He now towered over her, pure rage on his features as he stared down at her, Ruby trying her best to remember killing someone in the haze of her mind. Finally, a few dots were connected and she shook her head.

"The giant Grimm?"

"THE. ANCIENT. ONE. IS. NOT. A. GRIMM!" Each point was stomped into her with his foot. With no Aura to dim the blows, she felt the full force of each hit. "She was so much more, meant to
do so much more. But you KILLED HER!" He tried for one last stomp but Ruby managed to roll out of the way and stood on shaky legs. "But the Queen, the kind and generous Queen, has given me the reward to take care of you. And one does not upset the Queen...Maybe I'll bring you back for Cinder to play with, that might improve her mood..." he added as an afterthought.

"Cinder's not the queen?" Ruby asked, buying as much time as she could as she reached behind her and slipped her fingers into the pouch that held her stimulant boosters. The man gave a dark chuckle to her question.

"Hmph, only in her wildest dreams..."

She quickly pulled one of the booster packets out and pulled the cap off with her teeth before pushing the thin needle into her thigh and squeezing her stimulant into her system. The familiar numbness filled her body, easing her aching chest and filling her limbs with power. Gripping her weapon with renewed strength, she looked up at her attacker and gave a smirk as her Aura was restored by artificial means. Pooling her Aura into her Semblance, she disappeared in a flurry of rose petals, leaving him confused as he just stared at the spot she was just standing in.

Just as quickly as she disappeared; she reappeared swinging her weapon. Somehow, Tyrian saw this coming and quickly blocked the attack that was aimed at his head, leaving a trail of sparks and petals in her wake. Spinning her weapon around herself, she forced the man a few steps back as she launched attack after attack against him. When he saw an opening, she simply sprinted away and came back just as fast for another heavy attack.

Picking up speed as she went she was beginning to get inside of his blind spots faster and faster. Finally, she made a feint and dove to the right just as he tried to predict her attack to come from the left. She fired a round to add momentum to the attack as it closed in around his neck. Everything happened so fast, she barely registered when her attack was blocked by something. Looking at where her scythe was, her weapon was being held back by a large scorpion tail that was coming out of the back of Tyrian.

"Suprise!" he sang out as he wiggled his fingers at her with a wide grin on his face. He lowered his tail suddenly and Ruby was caught off guard when he kicked out and sent her away roughly; tearing his jacket off as he jumped backwards and flipped through the air. Landing on his feet, he spread his arms out and smiled at her. "My my! The rose has thorns!" he called out as he tilted his head slightly. Ruby stared at the man and pulled the bolt open, releasing the spent round and loading up a new one.

"I'm not going down without a fight!" she shouted as she spun the weapon around and took up a different stance.

Inhaling deeply, he paused for a moment and savoured the blood lust in the air before opening his eyes and staring down at her, "Gooooood..." The next moment, he charged her and the battle resumed. Sparks and gun fire echoed through the desert sands. Both sides were pushing their own advantages on each other's weaknesses. Tyrian was a far superior close quarters fighter, he constantly made use of his unorthodox fighting style and the nearly impossible stretches of his body to dodge and attack from angles Ruby had no hope to defend against.

While Ruby used her Semblance to her advantage, dragging the fight into a mid-range fight where she had better control over her weapon and staying out of arm's length of the man. She could sprint in and out of combat and attacked from new angles, but he had many years experience over her, and it showed. Coming in for another attack, she aimed high for his head, but he ducked below it. Just as quickly, she changed the direction of her attack and came down lower, only for him to do the same.
In quick succession, Ruby swung over and over again, lowering her aim each time. With each slash, Tyrian moved lower to the sand below them until he was completely pressing down upon it. Suddenly, he sprang up and spun around on his hand, kicking Ruby in the face twice before she jumped back and sped off into the desert, away from him. When she decided she was far enough, she stopped and took aim with Crescent Rose. Looking down the scope, she saw the man looking all around him, trying to find where she would pop up next.

Making sure a round was loaded, she aimed carefully before firing a round at him. Just as she pulled the trigger, Tyrian looked at her direction and jerked his head out of the way just as the bullet was about to hit him. With a small giggle, he lowered his stance and his tail playfully moved around him. Firing more rounds at him, the man's tail began to deflect her sniper rounds with ease, all while he had a stupid smile on his face. Growling in frustration, Ruby loaded a fresh magazine into her rifle and charged forward once again.

Anger flowed through her body as every attack was deflected or dodged with ease. Ruby's feet were kicked out from under her and she rolled to prevent his stinger from puncturing her and filling her with whatever poison it was filled with. Creating some space, Ruby took deep breaths as her Aura struggled to stay active. From the corner of her eye, she saw the Red Death and Summer Rose looking at her, watching her failure. Finally, it was the Red Death who spoke first, turning to her mother.

"We need the power, give us the silver light!" the Red Death demanded as she gritted her teeth.

"I can't. Even if I could, I would never let you use it. It's Ruby's gift, not yours..."

As the two argued, Tyrian's voice stole her attention. His head was tilted slightly, confused was slapped across his face as he examined her. "How many of you are in there?" he asked. Growling, Ruby got to her feet and charged at Tyrian once more. Snapping out of his thoughts, he grinned as he easily dodged and blocked her attacks like before. She was quickly thrown to the ground and had to roll to her feet, only to be tripped and a terrible pain rocked through her shoulder.

Falling down the sand dune, her weapon landed in front of her as her blood felt like it was on fire. Reaching to her wound, she pulled her hand back when she felt blood, only to see a deep purple fluid coating her wound. A laugh echoed through the air as Tyrian began to descend the dune with ease and walked towards her. Gathering her strength, she began to crawl for her weapon as her world began to tilt and her heart hammered in her chest.

"Hmmm, you have quite the toxin resistance, don't you..." Tyrian said as Ruby crawled to her weapon, her strength failing her and she stretched for it. "One more shot should do you..." he said as he approached her. His tail was poised over his shoulder as his golden eyes turned a sharp shade of violet. Her breathing came in short bursts as she realized she was just out of reach of her weapon. She did not want to die here, in such terrible pain, as her blood boiled with the toxin in her body.

A bloody hand came down and gripped the weapon in front of her and lifted it into the air. Following the arm, she saw the Red Death holding Crescent Rose in her right hand, a sour look on her face as she stared down at Ruby. Walking past her, she heard her speak. "I will show you, how to war..." Tyrian's focus went from Ruby to the Red Death as she pulled a stimulant booster from her pouch and injected herself with it. A shade of dark Vermillion covered her body before fading away, her Aura was renewed as Ruby stopped moving and just watched her dark, bloody reflection.

Tyrian simply ignored Ruby in favour of his new prey as he grinned. "I'm surprised you're still standing..." he called out to her, his tail moving from side to side as watched her. The Red Death simply adjusted her grip on the stolen weapon and gripped hard with her right hand. Slowly, the
grin slipped from his face as he continued to stare at the woman in front of him. He took a quick
whiff of the air and leaned in close, trying to look into her face despite being several feet away.
"Who are you..." he asked suspiciously.

"I...am Death." A strong gust of wind suddenly flew past them, making the sand shift across their
feet. Slowly, red rose petals began to float across the air. Tyrian was watching them coming from
the ground and all around them. Soon, a large circle was formed by them and the wind began to
pick up. A storm was beginning to form around them as more and more petals were added to the
air, a wall of red petals surrounded them, creating an arena to fight in.

"How are you doing this.." Tyrian asked as he looked around at the eye of a blood stained
hurricane he found himself in. Instead of answering, the Red Death charged forward with the
weapon. Tyrian went to block but was caught off guard at the massive delay his new opponent
had. The Red Death was not as fast as Ruby was, but she was still quickly spinning the weapon.
Tyrian deflected the first strike but was caught off guard once again by the trail of red petals that
followed the attack.

They wrapped around his arm and flowed past him as he cried out in pain. Jumping away from her,
he examined his hand and saw dozens of small cuts along his fingers and hand. The small wounds
were quickly healed by his Aura, but not before blood dripped from the tiny wounds and was
soaked up by the sands. Flexing his scarred hand, he gritted his teeth and looked at her. Throwing
away his overconfidence, he charged forward with an attack. She managed to block the series of
attacks while a trail of red petals followed in the wake of her scythe, causing the man to keep his
distance.

Every opening she created with her blocks and counters, a trail of rose petals were quick to
capitalize on and open up wounds on his body. The whites of his clothing were quickly becoming
stained red with his blood as the two fought. Impatience and annoyance were making Tyrian's
movements more predictable, Ruby watched as her dark reflection managed to land a clean hit on
his chest which was followed by another stream of the razor sharp petals, forcing his Aura to close
his cuts as quickly as they were created. Holding onto his chest, Ruby saw his Aura was beginning
to waver, his cuts taking longer to heal.

With a cry, he charged forward once again with his clawed vambraces. Blocking his hands, she
narrowly avoided his stinger as he began to thrust it into her, desperate to hit her. While she was
distracted he brought his legs out behind her and pushed her hard, tripping her onto her back.
Before she could get back up, however, he quickly mounted her and grabbed her arms to stop her
from fighting back. Pushing the scythe against his chest, she tried to push him off but he was too
strong. His golden eyes turned purple once again as his tail shot forward and he tried to stick it into
her face.

"An eye for an eye!" he cried out each time he tried, but she managed to tilt her head quickly
enough to dodge. With nowhere for her to go, he released her arms and brought his fists down onto
her face. The claws were biting into her Aura as he cried out and laughed loudly each time he
connected. His laughter continued as his tongue left his mouth, lost in the madness of his blood
lust. With each hit, her Aura was drained at an alarming rate, even with the petals surrounding him,
cutting open his exposed skin, he still brought blades down, trying to kill the Red Death before he
died himself.

As he leaned back for another hit, the bloodied woman lashed out with her fist and connected with
his face. He cried out as he held his nose and yelled out in anger as he dove for her once again. The
Red Death brought the scythe up and tried to block the attack, but he slipped under the staff of the
weapon and pinned her to the ground. A sharp pain entered the side of her body as his stinger came
under him and stabbed her through her clothes. She cried out as more toxin was pumped into her, the man laughing as he leaned forward, a mad look in his eyes.

With the last of her failing strength, the Red Death thumbed the trigger of her weapon and the scythe fired, shooting out from between them. Lowering her arms just in time, the sharpened scythe blade sliced through the last bit of Aura Tyrian had and bit into his skin. Separating his forearms from his body from above his elbows; as well as a large chunk his tail. With a terrible scream, Tyrian launched himself off of her and fell to his knees nearby. Staring at the stumps of his arms, his tail flailing around uselessly, crying out in pain and shock.

The Red Death cried out in pain as she pulled the stinger from her side and threw it onto the ground. Shakily, she got to her feet and looked at Tyrian. Ruby could feel the pure anger and fury coming out of her as she screamed out and ran right towards him, tackling him to the ground. Mounting him, she screamed out as he tried to push her off with the stumps on his arms, his tail refusing to listen to him, as the Red Death's assault continued.

With no Aura to save him, his nose broke, and a steady stream of blood flowed from his nose and pooled in his mouth. His tail tried to push her away, but she grabbed it and pushed it to the side as he began to rake her nails across his face, catching open cuts and making them bigger; sand entering his wounds with each slash of her nails as she screamed out and kept attacking him. Again, he tried to use his tail to push her away, but she grabbed onto his face to stop the strong appendage from moving her.

With her fingers anchored under his ears, she pressed her thumbs against his eyes and squeezed. His eyelids did nothing to protect him as her thumbs were shoved into his eye holes and ruptured his orbs. He screamed out and thrashed against the ground, trying to escape her grasp. Blood flowed from where his eyes used to be as she put more pressure on her thumbs and pushed as far into his skull as she could. Screaming with him, the Red Death finally pulled her thumbs out of his eyes and wrapped her hands around his neck and began to squeeze.

His painful screams were cut off as her grip on his neck was being tightened. She ignored the tail as it slammed into her the best it could until she lifted his head and slammed it down into the sand. Over and over again, his skull was lifted and bashed against the sand below them, dazing him as his body grew weaker. Each slam was punctuated with her growling voice, "You. Are. My. Enemy." Over and over again. Ruby saw what the Red Death was doing, and saw her weapon laying on the ground.

Quickly getting up, she raced over to her weapon and picked it up quickly. The sudden movement caused her head to feel like it was flipped upside down. The weapon in hand, she began to walk away. "Where are you going!" the Red Death demanded as she got off of Tyrian, who coughed and turned over, trying to crawl away. The Red Death raced towards Ruby and body-checked her into the sand to knock the weapon away from Ruby's hand. "The enemy still lives!"

Ruby ignored her cries as she kept a strong grip on her weapon. Suddenly, her stomach revolted against her and she vomited onto the ground as she bent over, staining the ground with blood and purple fluids. She began to crawl away as the world began to turn and tilt, the colours began to shift and everything began to morph. She closed her eyes to try and get her bearings as her strength failed her and she fell face first into the hot sands.

Suddenly, a hand grabbed her shoulder and forced her onto her back. She was horrified at what she saw. Tyrian stood above her, a terrifying grin on his face as his limbs began to grow back, but his eyes remained hollow. Blackness surrounded her as she tried to escape, only for more hands to hold
her down. She tried to fight against them, but they were too strong for her. His laughter continued as he became another set of hands to hold her to the ground. "Look at her..." a smooth, dark voice echoed in the endless black.

Looking to the side, she saw Cinder Fall standing over her; a single, burning eye staring down at her. Her other eye hidden behind her long, flowing hair that came over her shoulder. Her red dress left her shoulders bare and sleeves covered her arms. Black shorts laid just under her dress that left her long legs bare. "Such a waste, just like you said..." A figure came and stood next to her, the Red Death looked down at her with pity in her eyes.

"She could have been so strong...so powerful..." the Red Death said as she placed a hand on Cinder's shoulder and leaned against Pyrrha's murderer. "Now she's weak and pitiful..." Ruby tried to fight against the hands to get away, but they held on tightly. "Hold her down, don't let her escape..." the Red Death commanded and the whole blackness was filled with bitter laughter. Looking around, she cried out at the sight she saw. All the hands that were holding her down were people she knew, each of their eyes was black and red and were grinning at her.

Penny and Roman held her legs down to stop her from kicking. Blake was coming up from the blackness under her and held her hips stable to stop her from bucking. On her left arm, Weiss and Nora pinned her arm down while Yang and Jaune held the other. On either side of her head, Pyrrha and Ren held her down with all their weight and strength, making her immobile. With a laugh, Yang reached out with her hand and tried to cover her mouth to smother her, but she bit down hard on her flesh.

With a yell of pain, Yang pulled her arm back and shook his, she could taste Yang's blood in her mouth as she tried to call out for help, but her voice came out weak. Yang's voice came out wrong and distorted. "She fucking bit me! Am I going to catch this?" she asked as she looked up at Cinder and her bloodied reflection. The Red Death shook her head and sighed.

"Looks like someone needs her medicine..." The Red Death brushed Cinder's hair out of her face gently, only to shove two fingers into her now exposed eye and began to dig around. Blood flowed from the open wound as she searches for whatever was hidden behind her eyes, while Cinder hardly moved; her one burning eye staring down at Ruby without complaint. Eventually, the Red Death began to pull something long from the eye socket that looked like a fat, pulsing, grey worm with a black Grimm mask on its face. "Open her sleeve..."

Fighting with all her strength, Jaune and Yang tore open the sleeve on her right arm to expose her injection site. Uselessly, Ruby fought and turned away from her friends and family as the Red Death came towards her. Running a hand gently over the opened sores and the veins that oozed pus that had overtaken her injection site, she laid the worm onto the skin and stepped away. Ruby watched in horror as the worm began to shake and twist until six needle thin legs came out of its bloated sides and it stood up.

It began to pick at her scabs and move skin out of the way as it chose its spot carefully. With its thin legs, it cut open her skin and began to burrow into her arm. Ruby began to scream and fight even harder against those who held her down until a sudden chill ran through her body. Her eyes unfocused and began to close, her strength waned and failed her as she tried to breathe, but could not find her breath. In her last moments, Ruby watched Cinder lean down and stare at her. One eye was burning brightly while the other was an endless blackness that oozed crimson down her perfect skin.

"Sleep, little rose...Sleep for eternity...."
Hokay...So...This chapter is a doozy, lets start at the top of the list.

First, I'm going to be taking a small break after this to play Destiny 2, so if I'm not around for a while, that's why. I made this chapter longer as a way to hopefully tide you over until the next chapter when Destiny 2 dies down a little.

Secondly, the Ruby/Red Death shifts. So, I came up with the idea of using Crescent Rose as a "Talking Stick" for whoever controls the body. So if the Red Death holds the weapon, the Red Death controls the body. Hopefully, that clears up the Tyrian fight scene.

Next, big thanks to StreetAngelJ for his editing and proofreading for this chapter as always.

If you enjoyed, leave a Kudo! If you already have, leave a comment! I love reading them and love replying to them. This story is also posted on FF.net under the same name, so if you read over there, show your support! I also have a Tumblr, so come and say hi, I love talking about anything and everything.

And as always, thank you for taking time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness.
The Nightshade Blade: Pt III

Chapter Notes

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MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM
get the right side of the building, let alone finding out which room they were staying in.

With no way of knowing, Blake turned and began to leap away from the hotel and back towards the Black Fang base. It was well past midnight by the time she returned. Mumbling the password to the guard at the door, she left a trail of dripping water in her wake as she made her way across the darkened building to the locker room. With it being so late, no one was around to see her change out of her soaking wet clothing and hang it to dry before walking to the showers to clean herself.

The lukewarm water burned her chilled skin as she stood under the old shower head. She stared down at the tiny blue tiles that made up the floor between her feet as she braced herself against the wall. Watching the water circle down the drain, her mind continued to replay what she had witnessed before. The smile on Yang's lips, the way her lilac eyes lit up when they talked. The tilt of her head as she read off whatever Neo had written and the laughter that Blake could only hear in her mind.

Her nails dragged across the tiles as her hand balled into a fist again. Her imagination playing out scenes for her, just to torment her further. The looks becoming smiles, smiles becoming kisses, kisses becoming deeper as Neo laid on top of Yang. Blake's teeth grit as she pictured what the two had done behind closed doors, intimate moments that were stolen from Blake by Neo. Sounds entered her mind, groans and moans of lovemaking that were not from her, whispered phrases and silent gestures of love-

With a strangled cry, Blake slammed her fist against the tile wall to cut off her brain before it stomped on whatever remained of her heart. A choked sob echoed through the empty room, she held her hands over her mouth to lessen the sound she made, trying to erase her own existence as her knees gave out and she fell to the ground. Her Aura had yet to recover, so the pain rocked up against her body when her knees hit the wet floor. With her eyes closed, he fought for air before breaking down into more quiet crying, her sounds covered by the shower head above her.

Her whole body shook as she broke further and further. Yang was gone, and it was her fault. Blake was the one who left, dropped her to shatter, and someone else came to pick up the pieces. So she cried, she cried and cried until her body had no more tears to fall. She stayed under the water until the water turned cold, and she was numb again. Eventually, she got up from her spot on the shower floor and turned off the water. Dragging herself out of the shower area and to her locker, she pulled her towel out and began to dry herself off, just going through the movements with an empty mind.

Changing into some loose clothing, a pair of shorts and a baggy shirt, she made her way to one of the offices that were turned into a bunk room. Two bunk beds on opposite walls with a footlocker at the end of each set. Reaching her bunk, she was lost for a few moments when she saw wooden struts in place of precariously positioned piles of books holding up the second bunk. Just the memory of one of the best times of her life was enough to send her back into a fit of crying.

"Hey," A soft voice called out to her. Looking over to the bunk across from hers, she saw Ram looking at her from the top bunk of the other set, the one Ruby would have occupied back at Beacon. "You okay?" she asked softly. Ram was a nice girl, dark hair and dark eyes. The kind of person you would not even think twice about if you walked past them on the street.

"I'm fine..." The woman eyed her up suspiciously but did not push it. Blake simply nodded and slipped into the bed she was given when she joined. Facing away from everyone else in the room, Blake curled in on herself and let small tears slip from her eyes as she tried to push the images of Neo and Yang happy together from her mind. Her sadness was soaked up by the pillow that she rested her head on and she willed her body to remain silent and still as she cried silently and alone.
in the dead of night.

When the morning finally came, Blake felt even more exhausted than when she laid down. Eventually, she pulled herself out of the bed with everyone else and took her time moving to the locker room to put her mostly dry clothes back on. She ate a basic breakfast while avoiding everyone as much as she could until the morning jobs came. A few people were given scouting missions and a team of Faunus were given the order to infiltrate the White Fang trade route to figure out their next move.

As everyone was moving around to get to their duties, the door opened up and the golden hair took her attention. All at once, all misery that weighed her down was lifted at the sight of Yang's lilac eyes, but what comes up, must come down. All of her misery and pain came crashing back down to her when she spotted Neo staying close to the blonde woman. The bitter bile forming in the back of her throat upon seeing the smaller woman staying so close to Yang while wearing a new style of clothing, going so far as to have her hand hanging off one of the belt loops of Yang's pants with her other hand holding her umbrella.

Before Blake could say anything, Velvet spoke up as she made her way towards the pair of women, Blake not far behind. "Glad you found the place," Velvet said with her heavy Menagerian accent, usually found in the deeper regions of the large island.

"Emerald sent us the address," Yang said as she looked at Blake for a few moments before looking back at Velvet. "So what's the first thing on the list, Boss?"

"Well, I still need to talk to her about what Cinder's plan is as well as her allies. Until then, Blake has something for you." The rabbit faunus nodded towards Blake and placed a hand on her shoulder, giving it a squeeze before walking away to do other duties she needed to perform. Blake nodded lightly before taking a deep breath and turning to lead the way, gathering whatever courage she had left in her body before walking. Taking her into the office space, she walked into the room they turned into an armoury.

In the centre of the room was two tables next to each other to make a large square. All around them were racks filled with rifles, shelves filled with pistols, shelves lined with all varieties of ammunition and the crates of Dust she smuggled into Mistral from Atlas. Behind one of the crates sat the case she protected with her life. Pulling it from its hiding place, she turned to present it to Yang when amber eyes locked onto the bright colours of Neo. The smaller pink, white and brown woman was standing close to Yang, waiting with her.

Blake tightened the grip on the case handle at the sight of her, waiting for when she would steal it away from her. Yang saw the staring contest that was happening between the two and cleared her throat. "Anything you want to tell me, Blake, you can say in front of her." Blake looked at Yang as she spoke, surprised that she would give someone who was once their enemy so much trust.

"But, she-"

"She's with me."

Blake was silent for a moment before looking back at Neo. The smaller woman was wearing a tighter jacker than before, showing off more cleavage. One of her pant legs were missing, showing off her skin with a long, thigh high sock. The grey scarf around her neck and the bowler hat on her head were reminiscent of Roman Torchwick, her former employer. With a reluctant sigh, she set the case on the table and thumbed the latches. Once they sprang open, Blake opened the safety case and turned to so Yang could see it.
Blake watched as Yang's eyes fell onto the case's contents and widened in surprise. Her hand gently traced the metal and carbon fibre while taking in the sight. "Where did you get this?" she asked as Neo reached inside and pulled the small journal out of its slot. It took every inch of self-control not to slam the case on her hand.

"I got it from Atlas."

Two quick snaps of a finger stole everyone's attention and directed it to the smallest woman in the room. She pulled her scroll out and typed something too fast to see before holding it up to Yang, who read out the message. "How did you get in? The whole kingdom is locked down." Yang asked in Neo's stead.

"I hid inside of an Atlas ship when it went back after I stopped Ruby from killing Weiss..."

Yang's eyes grew wider at hearing that. For Blake, it was hard enough to believe it even when she witnessed Ruby and Weiss fighting in the way were in Vacuo, let alone hear it from someone else. "She's in a bad way, Yang. I've heard rumours about someone people called the Red Death of the battlefield. I didn't think it was her, but when I got to Vacuo and saw her fighting Weiss, there were no doubts. They say she kills before people even know she's there, that if you see rose petals drifting on the winds, you're already dead. And that's not even the worst part. I tried to talk to her but she was injecting some kind of drug into her arm."

"She calls it Aura Stimulant. I don't know what it does but injecting something into your arm doesn't sound healthy to me. She has changed so much and it scares me. Before I left, she pulled a gun on me and told me if I stopped her from killing again, I'd be her enemy as well. I'm terrified of what she's become..." Blake finished telling Yang everything she knew about Ruby and her role in this war. On the older sister's face, she saw her heart being torn apart with every word she said.

Lilac eyes closed slowly, she leaned on the table with her one hand and bared her teeth. Blake suddenly jumped when she slammed her fist onto the table hard, cracking the cheap plastic with the force. "DAMNIT!" she shouted as she ran her lone hand through her hair in frustration. "I'm supposed to be her big sister! I'm supposed to take care and look after her! And all I've done for the last four years is drink myself into a hole!"

Just as Blake was about to comfort the hurting blonde; Neo was at her side, rubbing her hand up and down her back, soothing away her troubles. The taller woman was taking deep breaths to collect herself; when she was finished, she stood up straight and took another look at the prosthetic arm that was presented to her. "Thanks, Blake," she said finally as she looked up at her former friend, "This must have cost you a lot."

"Actually, it didn't..." she said sheepishly, "I stole it from a robotics facility while I was in Atlas... But, I saw Penny there."

"Penny? As in Ruby's friend Penny? The one that died?"

Blake nodded. "I don't know how, but she was there. She attacked me while I was leaving, but it was her." Yang just shook her head and sighed heavily.

"A sister, maybe?"

"She looked exactly the same, just like the day she died." Yang just sighed again, she looked so tired all of a sudden as she gazed upon the arm again. "We have a doctor lined up to attach the arm for you. Whenever you're ready." Yang nodded and slowly closed the case before reaching into her
pocket and pulled out a black flask with a yellow band of leather around it. Another wave of guilt passed through Blake's gut seeing it, just another reminder of how much damage she had done to Yang.

Yang popped the cap with her one hand and tilted her head back to take a sip from it, only to lean further back to try and get anything out of it. When none came out, she pulled the small metal container from her mouth and shook it, but heard nothing. "Damn it, I need a drink..." She breathed out and put the empty flask back where she pulled it out from. "Emerald usually fills it," Yang said offhandedly as she began to walk towards the hall, Blake and Neo following her out. Just before Yang set out, she patted Neo's head, minding the hat on her head.

"You cool if I head out on my own? I need to think about a few things." The smaller woman pouted and folded her arms, not wanting Yang to leave. Blake felt disgusted at the sight of how easily Neo had Yang wrapped around her finger. The blonde smiled lightly and leaned down to kiss her head, forcing Blake to look away. "I'll let you know where I am so you can pick me up later, kay?" Neo finally smiled and nodded, letting her walk away.

Before she could get too far, Blake spoke up by calling her name. When she stopped to turn around, Blake spoke finally, hoping to make the first step in recovering their broken relationship. "I know it'll never be the same. But, when everything is done, and everyone is safe. Maybe, could we be friends again?" she asked. Blake held her breath to listen for the answer.

Yang was silent for a few moments before the faintest hint of a smile graced her lips. "Friends are few and far between for me. I'd like that, Blake."

Blake smiled back and watched as her former partner walked away to try and find some alcohol. Blake let out the breath she was holding and felt a weight lift off her shoulders. The feeling of relief only lasted a few moments before a sharp blade was pushed in front of her face. Jumping back slightly, she saw Neo holding her umbrella with the blade fully extended from the tip and was pointing right at her face.

With nowhere to go, Neo pushed Blake back into the room slowly until both women were inside. Without looking away, the smaller woman moved her leg back behind her and gently kicked the door closed. The soft click was deafening as the smaller woman narrowed pink and brown eyes at the cat faunus. With a simple gesture, Neo held her hand by her head, thumb and pinky extended with the others curled towards her palm and shook it by her ear.

Understanding, Blake slowly reached into and pulled her scroll out of her pocket before holding it out to the smaller woman. She took it and flicked it open with her wrist and began to type rapidly before handing it back. Accepting it, she looked at what Neo had done. She had sent a single word, Blake, to a number she did not recognise. Suddenly, the soft chime of her text alert echoed through the room with another message appearing on the other side of the conversation.

"Stay away from Yang."

Looking up, she saw Neo had her scroll out in her other hand and was typing with her other arm still pointing her weapon at Blake. Neo's thumb moved and slid across the virtual keyboard of her device as she typed out a phrase. When she stopped, a moment passed until another message appeared on Blake's scroll. "If you don't I will hurt you." A small smirk appeared on the smaller woman's face as she flicked her wrist and the blade slid back inside the umbrella shaft, she spun it on her fingers before planting the tip on the ground and letting it lean against her body.

"I'm not afraid of your threats," Blake said as she stood up straight and stared down at the woman before her. Her eyes shift from pink and brown to white and pink as a dark smirk slipped onto her
"You should be."

"You don't scare me."

"But you're scared to lose her." Blake read the message off her scroll and glared at Neo. "Again."

"You don't-"

Blake's response was cut off by a snap of Neo's fingers. "And if I catch you following us again, you'll regret it."

Blake's eyes widened as she studied the woman. "How did you know?"

Neo rolled her eyes as gave her a glare that matched what she wrote. "Please, do you really think I wouldn't know when someone is following me? If I didn't I would have been long dead."

"Besides,"

"I can give Yang more than you ever could."

A growl left Blake's throat as she squared up against Neo, looking as imposing as she could. "And what's that?"

Before Blake could react, Neo's hand shot out and gripped her white jacket and pulled her down so they could look each other in the eyes. Then, in a low, raspy voice that sounded like brick rubbing against her throat, she spoke to her. "I'm not you." Before Blake could do anything else, Neo's features shattered and broke into a thousand shards of glass. Blake looked around quickly, looking for the shorter woman, but found that she was alone in the room.

Letting out a breath she did not know she was holding, she reached over to collect Yang's arm, only to find the whole case was missing. Panic flooded her body as she quickly searched the room and checked under the table when the chime of her scroll went off. The single message turned her panic into anger as she threw the device across the room. She heard the screen crack as it fell to the ground, her fury and jealousy impossible to contain.

"All's fair in love and war. ;) "

All around him, a warehouse was busy with people moving ammunition and Dust to where they needed to be. Everything needed to be perfect if this was going to work. He stood on the catwalk, his left hand gripping the railing as he surveyed his domain. Everyone was rushing around, doing their duty to the new world order that was on the horizon like a coming storm. He took a deep breath, taking in the scents of gunpowder, machine oil, and Dust as they were prepared for war.

"Adam!"

A deep voice tore his attention away from his underlings and he looked over to see a huge man standing by a table filled with large scrolls and maps of Mistral. The man himself had tanned skin and brown hair with a beard that wrapped around the sides of his face and chin. He wore simple brown shirt and pants under a green long jacket that was held together by a belt around his waist. Large boots graced his legs as he stepped forward, his arms crossed over his chest, showing off the
muscles in his forearms. "We need to talk."

"I have already given my report, Hazel. What else is there to talk about?" Adam said as he walked towards the table, Wilt and Blush never outside of arm's reach.

"You killed the Chancellor of Warfare, Adam. You knew he was in our pocket but you sent a pack to kill him anyway." The large man grabbed one of the large scrolls, tapped a few commands on it and tossed it at the bull faunus. Catching it, Adam narrowed his eyes behind his mask at the picture before him. A man in a Mistrali uniform was dead, the same could be said of the group of men that was around him. Adam recognised him from the news as well as recruitment posters and drives.

Looking at the rest of the photos, he saw there were just as many White Fang members who were dead and scattered around. He continued to flip through the pictures until he saw everything he needed to see. "I didn't kill him."

"Still doesn't change the fact that he's dead." He said as he handed Adam the second scroll. "Who are they?" He asked as Adam began to look through the second set of pictures before him. On this set was another team of White Fang soldiers that were loading up into a van that was just outside of the building the gunfight broke out in. He studied the people in the pictures but did not seem to recognise them. Sure, it was hard to pick people out when everyone was wearing the same mask; but stare at a person long enough and you could pick them out from any crowd.

"They're not mine," Adam said simply as he was halfway through swiping a picture to the side when he caught something at the last moment. Slowly, he pulled the picture back and expanded the image. What he saw was a blurry, out of focus figure standing on the back of the van, their back towards whoever had the camera. But he saw her shoulders, her posture and how her black hair fell over her back. "Blake..." he whispered to the photo.

"What?"

"This was Blake..." he said as he handed the scroll back to Hazel, who looked at the picture and narrowed his eyes.

"You sure?"

He knew his beloved.

"Yes, this means someone has been leaking information to a rogue cell."

"Take care of it," Hazel demanded as he unfolded his arms and walked away from him. Walking up to the railing, Adam peered down at his underlings, trying to figure out which one among them would betray him. The sounds of footsteps from behind him drew his attention to his lieutenant, Ilia. She stood behind him and looked in the direction where Hazel went.

"I hate that guy," she announced as she stood beside him. Something caught his eyes; looking back down, he noticed one of his underlings was looking up at him, watching him. He stared the man down, but he did not look away.

"Ilia,"

"Adam?"

"I think it's time to feed the dogs..."
The door opened and Emerald was pulled from the thoughts that were going through her head. She was sitting in a simple room; probably the break room if she had to guess. The rabbit faunus she talked to yesterday walked in without her mask. Three long, brown scars marred her face as she sat down in the seat across from her. The two women looked at each other for a few moments before the woman with the long, brown hair spoke. "So where do we start?" she asked as she leaned back in her seat.

Emerald gave a heavy sigh and looked around for a moment before her eyes settled on the woman in front of her. Memories of her past came back to haunt her; the day she left her home, her parents were sprawled out on a torn couch, the oppressing smell of smoked herbs filled the air. A small TV tray was filled with a variety of different smoking herbs, pills, and other things her twelve-year-old mind could not name at the time. As she pulled the small backpack tighter on her back, she said goodbye; they did not even open their eyes.

She remembered the first time she stole, the first time she got caught. The beating she endured unlocked her Aura and her Semblance manifested without her knowing. She managed to escape and heal with what little money she managed to acquire. The second time she was caught, he was nice, offering her his money for a price. She sold a piece of herself that day, something that she could never get back, but she was full that night, so she did not care.

Days turned to weeks, turned to months, turned to years. She learned to harness her semblance, learned the value of tourists and people too kind for their own good. She learned the value of a woman's body and the cost of the sin of the flesh. As she learned the hard truth of the world, the easier it became to eat, to sleep, to survive. A flick of her wrists got her breakfast and money from someone unfortunate enough to be in her way. A flair of her semblance got her lunch and enough money to pay off the gang that made their territory where she lived.

She had needed money for a sudden tax increase, so she tried for something bigger. Walking into the jewellery store, she eyed up a ring with a large sapphire on it. With her semblance, she tricked the man into placing the ring in the palm of her hand before running away. When her influence wore off, she needed to be as far away from the scene of the crime as possible, but she could only trick one person at a time; two people were still too much for her.

So she ran, people yelling and shouting after her. That's when she met her, a woman cornering her in an alleyway, wearing red with black hair over her dangerous, golden eyes. She showed her things, impossible things that not even myths and legends could explain. It made her question everything she knew.

"Follow me, and you'll never be hungry again."

"Thank you..."

Emerald opened her eyes when someone opened the door to the room. She saw Yang take three steps inside the room before looking at her and the woman with rabbit ears. "Shit. Sorry, is this a bad time?" They both just looked at her as she cleared her throat and rubbed the back of her neck. "I need a refill..." she said awkwardly.

“You’re out.” Emerald sharply replied. The blond woman just swore and walked out in search for someplace that she could drink. Emerald simply shook her head and looked at the woman sitting in front of her. She folded her arms across the combat vest that covered her chest. With a deep, shaky breath, their eyes met and she spoke, "We’ll start, at the beginning of the end."
Okay, so first off, thank you for coming back after such a long break, I never meant for it to be this long, but Destiny 2 and trying to get back into writing was harder than expected, so I'm sorry for that.

Secondly, I'm sure you have noticed that there is an ending chapter while nothing is being resolved, there is a reason for that. I realised that since making this story, it has grown into portions that I never imagined. I originally thought that this was going to be around 50 chapters, but we're on chapter 42 and we're maybe just over half-way to the ending I had thought up. Because in order to get certain plot points to pop, I need to set them up, which means I need to set up the setups so that it makes sense and before I know it, I'm ten chapters.

In saying this, How Could You Be My Enemy will not be falling off into the void like a Song of Ice and Fire. (Shots fired!) Instead, I'm pulling a George R.R. Martian (More shots!) and splitting the story into two parts, just because it's growing into something I can't control. In doing so, I'm hoping to draw in new readers cause 46 chapters are easier to digest rather than a 70+ chapter glob that just pops up periodically.

The break between the two parts will be short, so don't worry about that, but there will be a change up in rotation at the very end. Instead of Ruby's chapter on 46, it will be the epilogue with someone else. And that's all folks!

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo, if you already have, leave a comment! I love getting them and love replying to them. This story is also cross-posted on FF.net under the same name, so if you read there, come show your support! If you want to chat, don't hesitate to talk to me over FF or Tumblr (AngryFaceWritings) I love to talk about anything, really.

Big thanks to StreetAngeJJ for being an awesome person time and time again for editing, proofreading and general idea bouncer.

And as always, thank you for taking time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness!
Yang watched the golden liquid get poured into the glass she was given. Sitting on the stool in a dive bar she managed to find after an hour of walking towards the city centre; she figured she could use the time alone to get her thoughts in order the best she could. With it being before noon, the bar did not have many people in it, just a few older men and women who had nothing better to do with their lives other than to drink away their pains of age and remember the better times, like what Yang was doing now.

Taking the tumbler off the stained and worn wooden bar, she downed all of it in one go with a sharp jerk of her head. Setting the glass down with a thud, the bartender just raised his eyebrow and opened the bottle of whiskey and poured her another glass. "Rough morning?" he asked her. He was an older man, with a heavy stubble on his shaved head and face, heavy bags under his eyes from age. and wrinkles all across his forehead from stress.

"Rough life..." Yang replied as she took the drink from him and took a sip from it instead of her usual gulps, savouring the burning sensation she had grown used to. The man gave an agreeing grunt before knocking on the bar in front of him.

"Holler if you need something," he said as he set the bottle back on the rack and continued on his duties by ferrying drinks to the other patrons. Yang just tilted the cheap glass around a bit while staring at the liquid inside before taking another sip, letting her mind drift to thoughts she had thought she worked out on her way here. Her thoughts flying dangerously close to the cat faunus that was once her friend, then hated betrayer, then all the way back to someone she wanted to trust again. It was stressing her out, like some sort of emotional whiplash.

Suddenly, her thoughts were taken away from staring into the drink when someone turned on the ancient jukebox and began to play some old, depressing song no one had heard for thirty years. A single, acoustic guitar and an old, gritty voice that spoke about a love he had years ago flooded her ears. Yang just sighed as she set her glass down, placed her head in her only hand and closed her eyes; letting the buzz make her float in her own mind.

Blake’s small smile and the hope of mending their friendship was almost enough to forget everything that had happened to her. Almost. It would take time, a long time, but maybe she could have her friend back. The years have been good to her, at least, much better than they were to Yang. Of course, Blake probably was not trying to poison herself intentionally so as not wake up the morning after. Her train of thought was interrupted by a woman's voice coming up beside her.

"Is this seat taken?"

Looking over, she was about to give a response without any care of where the woman sat. That was until she saw the red and black armour with the impressive rotary sheath of her sword in her hand. Raven Brawnen was standing by the free seat, waiting for her daughter's permission to sit. "Yes," Yang said as she angrily downed the rest of the drink and slammed it onto the counter harder than
Before Yang could get far, a strong hand gripped her full arm and stopped her in her tracks. She wanted to turn around and punch her right in the face, but with her only arm being held, that was impossible. Instead, Yang stared into her mother's eyes, pushing all of her anger and fury into her own eyes. After a few moments, Raven spoke. "I just want to talk." Yang just scoffed and yanked her arm free from her mother's grasp before squaring up to her and jabbing a finger towards her face.

"You want to talk? Well, you're about twenty years too late for that." Yang quickly turned to walk away from the woman in front of her when the man behind the bar cleared his throat loudly. When she looked to him, he was rubbing his fingers together to get the message across. With a heavy sigh, Yang began to fish into her pockets but came up empty save for her scroll and a few Sient coins. Seven coins short of a full Lien. With a sigh, she put everything back and began to text Neo, since she had all the money in the black bag Yang usually carried around.

Her message was cut off when Raven declared that her tab would be covered as she set a number of Lien cards on the counter. Lilac met crimson as Raven set another card on the stack. "How about a drink then?" She asked. Yang just stared as the bartender collected his money and poured more into the glass she had previously abandoned. Yang debated with herself for a few moments before making her way back to the stool and nodding to the man.

"You have until I finish," Yang said as she knocked the liquid back in one go. As she set the glass down, Raven just looked at her and raised her eyebrow before placing a few more Lien down, reaching over the counter and grabbing the bottle from the man and pouring another drink for Yang. He just shrugged and accepted the money before moving along to tend to the others so they could have their privacy. Raven had filled her glass fuller than the man had, so Yang figured she really did want to talk.

After another two refills in silence, Yang looked over at her birth mother. The older woman was staring at the wall of liquor behind the counter, her brow was pinched and she was tracing the label of the bottle she had a grip on. A red bandana was holding back her locks of black hair so it did not get in her way. Her armour was well worn and kept in good condition and her weapon was sitting between the two women. Yang's own weapon currently sat compacted on her wrist. "So...." Yang dragged on as she picked up the refill and took a large gulp.

Raven took a deep breath, opened her mouth to say something, then thought better of it. After a few more moments, she finally spoke. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry for leaving you..." She had finally said them, those words that Yang would only hear in the deepest parts of her mind when she had way too much to drink. But if she was being honest, they were a little underwhelming. Taking another sip of her drink, Yang shook her head and replied. "Yeah, I've heard that one before..."

As she set her glass down, Yang's thoughts drifted again. Blake had made it quite clear that she was also sorry for leaving; but it did not make it hurt any less, it just slapped a band-aid on a bleeding wound. Normally, the bleeding will stop and the wound will heal in time. But this, this wound has been bleeding so long that it had festered, and it would take more than a simple apology to heal that. "Can you at least tell me why?" Yang asked as she had to force her hand to not crush the glass in her grip.

Raven was silent for a few moments before speaking again. "It's something that I inherited shortly after you were born. Something that I had no choice in. Something dangerous if it got into the wrong hands, something people would kill for. I left to protect you."

Yang slammed the glass back down on the table after drinking the last bits of it. "Yeah, I heard that
one too..." the blonde spoke through gritted teeth. "Why does everyone say that. Almost everyone who has left me says the same Dust damned thing! That they did it to protect me! I'm so tired of hearing that from people! What I wanted was people to stay with me for once, not protection. I can protect myself." She could feel her eyes shift in shade as her frustrations flowed from her mouth unrestrained.

"Clearly..." Raven said as she tapped the glass bottle against the metal plate that covered her stump before pouring a large amount into Yang's glass. A wave of phantom pain flared through her arm from the tap, and Yang wrapped her fingers around what was left of her arm and squeezed her damaged flesh. She tried to fight through the sensation as Raven reached over the bar top and pulled a glass from just under the bar top and poured herself a glass before sipping it.

When the pain passed finally, Yang massaged her arm lightly before looking away from Raven. "This happened because I protected someone. I fought to protect the person I cared about, I didn't run away saying it was to save her. It's what we do, right? Huntsmen and Huntresses, they give up their comfortable lives to give life and limb to protect people. I'm not ashamed or sad that I lost a part of me for her, I'm pissed because she left me with even saying goodbye..." Yang reached out and took a sip of her drink before sighing, "Am I wrong? am I just being selfish for wanting to know why or getting a chance to say goodbye?"

"No," Raven finally said as her drink hovered in front of her mouth. Staring into the amber liquid, as if it held all the answers in the universe, she continued, "We're just terrible, terrible people..." She downed the rest of her drink in one go before pouring herself another. Tilting the bottle more and more until only drips remained. She put some more Lien cards on the bar top and snapped her fingers; eventually the owner came around again and shrugged, taking the empty bottle away and placing a new one between them after taking the money for it and walking away again.

"Were you happy with him?" Yang asked finally. This question caused Raven to look over at her with a surprised look on her face before looking away.

"I wasn't always the best person to be around, I'll be the first to admit that," she said with a sip of her drink, "I was rude to my teammates, hated my teachers, didn't care about my grades and could care less about anyone else who was around me. But there he was, the first person I met after being launched off a cliff into a forest. My partner, your father. No matter who rude I was to him, he was always there with a smile. I would promise to meet him then never show up, but he waited there for hours."

"He would never stop with the terrible jokes, or stop talking, for that matter. He poked and prodded until I began to crack. He met my cold with warmth and my distance with patience. Every wall I put up around myself, he found a way through it until I finally broke; and he was there, waiting. And for the first time in my life, I was truly happy." Yang could see her jaw muscles tense up and her rapid blinking. Eventually, she reached into her top and pulled out a folded piece of paper and opened it between them.

The picture was a much younger Taiyang holding a small child in a blanket. Yang saw a small tuft of yellow hair coming off the child in his arms and both of them were fast asleep. Yang recognised the photo, it was one on the shelf next to a couple of others that catalogued the growth of herself and Ruby. "You were at my house?" she asked.

"It was my house first," Raven simply replied. "The day he found out I was pregnant, the first thing he did was take all the money out of his accounts and borrowed money from the bank in order to buy a house on Patch. We went there on a mission once and I was so enraptured with how quiet it was. It wasn't like Vale, where city life was everywhere, or like the tribe where the strongest
survived. It was quiet like you could live your life without anyone else. He bought an empty house and took up a teaching position at Signal, then you began."

Yang listened to the tale that was told, she did not even notice that her glass was empty until Raven filled it again for her. "Of course, Qrow was pissed. But they eventually worked out their differences, he even offered to help renovate the kitchen. The biggest mistake we ever made. By the time we found out he attached the kitchen cupboards to the ceiling, it was too late. I guess it was just his little revenge." Raven took another sip from her drink as Yang continued to stare into her glass. It was so strange to listen to stories about her father like this, let alone from her biological mother.

"He was destroyed after you left. But Summer was there to help him, to help me." Yang then laughed lightly to herself as she stared down at the amber liquid in her glass. "Its funny, after everything you did to us, I wouldn't change the past if I could. Because Summer wouldn't have been there for dad, and Ruby wouldn't have been born. And I wouldn't trade her for anything. Not for all the years I spent looking for you, not the future we could have had if you stayed, not for all the friends, money or booze in the world. Nothing, in this world, could ever replace her, and I'll do anything, pay any price, to have her back."

Yang always knew that Ruby was the most important person in her life. More important than Raven, Qrow, her father, and her friends. More important than the person who came for her and showed her how to love again. More important than the fragile friendship that had begun to reform between herself and her former partner. Ruby was more important than the limb Blake had given to her, more important than Yang herself. The most important person in the world to her, and she was alone. Another phantom pain made her stump throb, causing Yang to squeeze it through the jacket sleeve.

"That's fair..." Raven said flatly as she looked forward again. "I mean, I wouldn't forgive me either. But I bet you'll be happier with that new arm now, get back to fighting with two hands."

"You know about that?" Yang asked as she squeezed her arm once more before grabbing the bottle of alcohol and topping her mother off before filling her own glass. "I don’t need it to fight like I used to; I’ve got this... crazy... Aura arm thing going on when I unleash my Semblance. But, it’ll be nice to properly brush my hair again. I’ll have to ask Blake how she got it."

"Who do you think gave her the information to get it?" Raven asked with a shrug. Another bout of silence enveloped the two of them as they did their best not to glance over at each other. Yang’s mind was beginning to blur. She had lost count of how long the two of them had been sitting there with a bottle between them. Eventually, Yang lifted a heavy arm and slipped it into her jacket and pulled out the two letters she had stored there as well as her own, that she had reread a number of times.

"Here..." Yang said as she held the one with the woman's name written across it before putting Ruby's back in her jacket. Raven just looked at it with a raised eyebrow before accepting it. Turning it over, she examined everything about it before tearing open the side and looking.

"What is this?" She asked as she pulled out a single piece of folded paper.

"Dad's last words to you..." Raven looked at her daughter with wide eyes before looking down at the folded paper. Yang could have sworn she saw the woman's hands shaking slightly as she hesitated with opening it and reading the words written within, but maybe it was just the booze.

"I'm surprised you didn't destroy it..." she said quietly.
"Oh, trust me. I was really tempted to. But it wouldn't be fair to him."

Finally, the crimson-eyed woman opened the paper and began to read the contents. Yang averted her gaze and concentrated on not swaying in her seat, giving as much privacy as she could to her. Eventually, Yang heard her scoff. Looking over, Yang saw her shaking her head with the ghost of a smile on her lips. She let out another short, quiet laugh as her eyes searched the air in front of her, watching old memories replay, only for her. Folding the letter, she slipped it back into the envelope and folded the whole thing to fit into a pocket.

"Do you know what the first thing that man said to me when we first met during initiation at Beacon?" Raven asked. Yang shook her head and waited. "What's cook'n, good look'n"

Yang burst into laughter as Raven did her best to mimic the way Taiyang spoke. She could see her father doing that when they first met, including the wink and finger guns. "That stupid man, I'm not even joking. And you wouldn't believe the things he did to try and impress me..." Raven then began to rant on about everything her father had done to try and get her attention. Yang laughed along at her father's antics as well as the stories from the glory days of team STRQ.

Occasionally, Yang would add a story of her own about growing up, the two women trading stories with each other as the time passed. Yang trading the story of how Ruby first started using her semblance and running as fast as she could around the house, only to fall up every single stair when she tripped for a tale of how Taiyang tried to impress Raven by showing her he could take a hit; by letting an Ursa Major smack him through several trees, Landing him the medical ward for several days.

"Dust, I still remember when he thought a beard would turn me on. Calling it patchy is being generous." Yang laughed as Raven stroked her own chin and pointed to a part just under her bottom lip. "Best he could do is a little strip here..."

Yang laughed as she nodded. "He grew that out after Ruby was born."

"Oh, lord..." Her mother shook her head and let her face fall into the palm of her hand.

"Yeah, mom liked it though..."

A stillness came over the two of them. Yang was doing her best not to call Summer 'mom' in front of Raven, but it just slipped out. Yang sighed as she looked over at Raven, her world spinning slightly. "Sorry, I just-"

"No, it's fine," Raven said as she put her hand up. "I may be your mother, but she will always be your mom. I could never compare to her, in anything. She was even better at loving Tai than me. I didn't deserve to be her friend." The woman sighed deeply as she stared into the bottom of her glass before holding it up between them.

"To Summer Rose and Taiyang Xiao Long," Raven offered. Yang smiled slightly and lightly tapped her glass against Raven's before the two women pounded back whatever was in their glasses. Yang reached for the bottle to refill their glasses, only to find it empty.

"Shit..." Yang slurred as she shook the bottle and tried to conjure some more out of nowhere. With a disappointed huff, she placed the bottle back onto the counter and looked at her mother. "Guess that's it for me. Probably for the best, Don't want to drink too too much."

"Well, you're better than Qrow. He doesn't know when to call it a night..." Yang nodded at Raven's words as she pulled out her scroll and turned her location back on so Neo could come get her.
While they waited, all the alcohol she had drank began to wear on her. Her body was becoming heavier as her head began to sink. Eventually, she felt a hand on her shoulder that shook her out of the small bout of unconsciousness that she was fighting against.

Looking over, she saw Neo in her Nyx mask. Yang smiled widely as she reached out with her finger and tapped her nose. "Hey, Shortcake. Let's go home..." Yang mumbled out as she tried to stand from her stool, only for the world to turn black and everything become weightless.

Raven watched as a smaller woman walked into the bar a few minutes after her daughter had passed out at the counter. It was probably more awkward than it looked for such a small woman to have Yang lean on her with no control over her body, but from the way she positioned her limp body, she had done this before. Emerald green eyes met blood red as they stared each other down. She may look different, but Raven knew this was the woman who she stopped from stabbing her daughter that day on the train.

They locked eyes for a few more moments before the smaller one began to move towards the door, her daughter hanging off her side. "Hey," Raven called out before they got too far. She stopped and looked back at Raven. "Take care of my Sunshine. Okay?" The smaller woman blinked a few times before nodding and continued to head towards the door. Raven watched the pair leave the dive bar before turning back in her seat and stared down at the empty glass in front of her.

Slapping another few lien cards on the wood to summon the bartender, she sighed deeply and closed her eyes. "Keep them coming. If drinking helps by brother forget the pain, it should work for me too, right?" The man shrugged as he set a fresh bottle in front of her and cracked the top before leaving. Raven poured her glass full and held it up in front of her, gave a silent plea for forgiveness to what friends she had lost, and began to drink.

Chapter End Notes

Why am I so bad at writing on time...

hokay! A few things to say here.

1. I'm sorry for taking so long between updates, I'm having a really fun time with destiny 2 and get caught up in the grind and before I know it, I need to go to bed so I can pretend to be a benefit to society.

Two. As a reminder, I wrote Raven into the story before Raven became the world worst mother in the show. So if you have a concerns about who I portray her, that's why.

C. Why am I labeling my points with different things, just to annoy you.

iV. Thanks, as always, to StreetAngelJ for his hard work for editing and proofreading at the worst times of the day.

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo! If you already have, leave a comment! I love reading them and I love replying to them! This story is also posted on FF.Net, so if
you read there, come show your support! You can also contact me via Tumblr (AngryFaceWritings) come say hi!

And as always, thank you for taking time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness!

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Do you own an xbox one?
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Well! if you message me over Xbox (Albino Husk) You can join Sparks of Light! A little clan I'm a part of and we need members for trails of the nine as well as a raid team!
If you're interested, please message! We are desperate for loot and rewards...There is only three of us that actually do anything in the clan...please...
"Where are we going?" Weiss asked from the passenger seat in the front of the Bullhead. It had been a number of hours since they began their trip back to Atlas, and Weiss did not want to be stuck in silence in the back anymore. Plus, any information she could get out of Alkmene Gift would only be a benefit to her current situation. The sun had set quickly after they left and they had been flying through the air with nothing but the roar of the dust powered engines.

"I'm taking you to the Mistrali front. Where you will play the good soldier, or bad things happen..." Alkmene Gift told her simply as he looked over the variety of different switches, buttons, and gauges that controlled the air vehicle. Weiss was acutely watching which switches he hit in what order, as well as where he kept the numbers on the dials. For as much of an asshole this man seemed to be, he looked like he knows what he's doing. Weiss folded her arms and looked out the window into the pitch black night.

"Why? Don't you have the entire Atlas military in the palm of your hands?"

"We having troubles taking Fort Meihua, the Mistali are entrenched there and we are taking heavier losses than expected. As much as you're an icy bitch, you know your way around a battlefield." Weiss narrowed her eyes at the man when he called her an icy bitch. She decided that the term Ice Queen was not so bad anymore. Folding her arms, she leaned back in her seat and continued to stare at him until he looked over at her and shrugged. "What, you're good, what else do you want from me?" he asked as he focused on flying again.

"I want to know, what's in it for you?" Weiss asked as she crossed her legs in the co-pilot seat and glanced over at him, "At the end of all of this, what do you get?"

"A seat of power in the new world order," the man replied. He caught a confused glance from her and sighed. "Why do you think we're doing this? Everything we have done was in the name of Unity. Do you know why the first Great War was waged? It was to unite the world under a single banner, where everyone could be safe from Grimm. Culture, art, language, traditions, all these things divide us, make us different. That difference creates conflict, and that turns into fighting, turns to war."

"If we're all the same, there is nothing different, nothing to fight about, that was what King Ragnar wanted, no more fighting. That's all we want as well, world peace, but that can't happen if we are divided by borders and kingdoms. When we are all under compliance, under one banner, one kingdom, one ruler, then the fighting will finally be over." As Alkmene spoke, Weiss just watched with horrid fascination; this is what he actually believed. That setting the world on fire and then
coming in to rescue it would somehow make everything better.

"You're sick."

"We're dreamers."

"You're monsters!"

Suddenly, in a fit of anger, the man pulled a handgun from his side and aimed it right at Weiss's face. His teeth were clenched and rage was behind his yellow-green eyes. "We will have peace in our lifetime! Where war and Grimm attacks no longer threaten humanity! Where our children are no longer trained from birth to fight and die as living weapons! If I have to kill people to make that dream real, then I will kill as many as I need!" He thumbed the hammer of the pistol back; Weiss saw that there was no shaking in his hand, his zealotry steadying his resolve.

Cool blue eyes stared him down. Willing herself to breathe, she gathered her thoughts before speaking. "You still need me alive, remember?" Weiss told him matter-of-factly. She saw the man's jaw tense up a few times before he reluctantly set his sidearm back at his side and took the controls once again. "What of the Faunus?" Weiss asked after she was sure he was not going to kill her as soon as she opened her mouth. Alkmene was silent for a few moments before speaking.

"The greatest force to unify everyone is our greatest enemy." He said it simply. It all made sense to her now. They were using the White Fang and the Faunus to rally everyone to their own banners. After Mistral is taken, they will probably release the truth after some miraculous discovery by someone they put into place. Then, as one, they will go to war against the Faunus and kill two birds with one stone.

"You're talking about genocide,"

"I'm talking about Unification," he said dangerously.

She could hardly believe this, sacrificing an entire species for the sake of unifying what little was left of the world. Part of her hated him and Watts for thinking of the idea, another part hated the fact that it would probably actually work if it managed to get off the ground. Another part of her hated the fact that, once upon a time, she would have been completely for this plan, before she went to Beacon and met her friends. Her first, true and real friends.

The silence between them grew for a length of time until Weiss noticed something. On the control panel, on the far side of it, was a blinking red light. Alkmene seemed to ignore it for the time being; but the longer it flashed, the more worried she became. Finally, she pointed to it and asked what it meant. Following her finger, he stared at the offending flickering light for a few moments before his brows pinched together for a few moments before his eyes widened and horror flooded his features.

"SHIT!" He quickly flicked a few switches and launched himself from his seat and rushed to the back of the bullhead. Quickly following, Weiss stood next to him as he wrapped a harness around his hips and connected it to the emergency lines that lined the hull of the air vehicle before hitting the red switch that opened the large rear hatch. A gust of wind hit them as she stared out into the pitch black of the night. She could see nothing in front of them at the moment; but her attention was pulled when her captor opened a weapons locker and pulled an oversized flare gun from it and loaded it.

Taking careful aim, he fired the luminous shot into the darkness behind the bullhead. For a brief moment, the shot carried on behind them, barely visible. Suddenly, a great explosion of white light
erupted from the shot and illuminated the darkness around them, bringing with it an army of killer shadows. Weiss understood what that light was now; it was a Grimm detector. Behind them were dozens of flying Grimm, trailing behind them. Apex predators of the skies, Raptors.

Sensing the horror and dread from them, the eyes of the birds of prey lit up in red and they began their attack on the single bullhead. Raptors were known to hide parts of themselves to help in their hunts. Normally, the glowing red eyes of Grimm were an easy way to know where a Grimm was, but Raptors had developed a way to hide this with a second set of eyelids. Though their vision would be heavily impaired, they could blend in completely in the night.

As the flying Grimm began to swoop in for the attack, Alkmene rushed back to the locker, pulled out a rifle, and loaded it up quickly as Weiss pulled Myrtenaster from its place at her hip and quickly spun the chamber of Dust for her needs. Swinging her weapon, she tried to summon glyphs to attack the Grimm; but none came, only the hollow sucking noise of an empty Dust cartridge trying to be used. All of her Dust was gone, and she had none in reserve on her person.

Never before had Weiss felt more vulnerable than she did at that moment. No Dust and a small army of Grimm descending upon them, feeding off her fear. A burst of automatic fire snapped her out of her petrification as flashes of light lit up the cabin. Looking behind her, she saw Alkmene firing at the horde of Raptors that were swarming them. "Snap out of it, Schnee!" he shouted at her as he picked his targets and fired. Weiss heard the screech of pain as one of their attackers fell towards the water below them in agony. Rushing towards the locker, she grabbed one of the rifles and stood next to him.

While she was more used to side arms and her own Huntress weapon; thanks to the Accelerated Specialist Program, she was no stranger to the standard issue Atlesian assault rifle. She rushed back to Alkmene's side and took aim with him. Using controlled bursts of automatic rifle fire, she aimed for the glowing eyes of the flying Grimm as they dived and banked out of the way. Unused to using such weapons and with the lack of visibility; her rounds were all missing their marks. Suddenly, one of the Raptors came in for an attack. Landing on the lowered ramp, Weiss saw the form of the creatures that were assaulting their ride.

Long, black feathers graced its wings. White spines lined its hunched back, it had a long neck that was bare of any feathers. An avian mask sat on its long sharp beak with a hole where it's nose would be. Glowing red eyes stared at them with hatred for simply being alive. It spread its wings and screeched at them. Weiss quickly aimed at the vulture-like Grimm and opened fire on it, sending a burst down its throat. It swung its head back and forth and fell out the back, dead before it hit the water below them.

As the bullhead sped through the night, the flare quickly grew too far away to shed light on their attackers. So, they had to depend on the glowing red eyes to find their targets. Aiming at a set of eyes that were closing in, Weiss took aim and pulled the trigger, only to hear the hollow clicks of an empty magazine. Throwing the rifle to the ground, she grabbed one of the three rifles that still remained in the locker and took aim again; only to fall to the ground when another Raptor bashed the side of the bullhead, shaking the whole thing.

Another sudden attack on the side of the vehicle sent her sliding down towards the opening, where a Raptor was waiting to rend her with its long talons. Before she fell out, she threw the rifle to the side and grabbed onto a ring that was on the floor to secure large crates so they did not slide around during transit. The Raptor began to climb inside, but before it could get to her, its mouth was set aflame with a flare from Alkmene when he fired at it between reloading. The Grimm screamed out as it thrashed about inside, scratching deep gouges on the steel and walls.
It threw itself against the side trying to escape, only to get the safety line tangled up in its talons before falling back out of the bullhead, dragging Alkmene behind him. Weiss watched him yelling as he was knocked off his feet and was dragged out into the night. Quickly, she got to her feet, grabbed the rifle she had thrown to save herself, and aimed downwards at the hanging man. From his awkward angle, he was still firing at the Grimm that were flying around waiting for an opportunity to strike.

Using the hanging man as bait, Weiss made quick work at any Grimm that came close to getting him. Specialized bullets were rending through the feathers and skin, dropping them to the water below them. With their numbers dropping quickly, only five Raptors remained, and they decided that the two humans were not worth the fight. Slowing down, they faded back into the darkness of the moonless night and disappeared from sight. Weiss watched the darkness for a few more moments before letting her breath out and lowering the rifle.

"Hey!" a strained voice called out to her from below. Looking down, she saw Alkmene looking back up at her. "Pull me up!" he shouted at her. Weiss stared down at him and narrowed her eyes. Instead of grabbing the safety line, she reached to her hip and slipped her rapier free from its holder. "NO! NO NO NO NO NO!" he frantically shouted at her as she just pressed the sharpened side of her weapon against the line, threatening to drop him in the ocean. "You need me!"

"No, I don't!" she shouted back at him, "You put the ship on autopilot before we came back here! Even if I don't know how to land, I'm sure I can figure out how not to crash into the water too hard. I'll be close enough that someone will spot me and come for me. I don't need you!"

"They'll die!" he shouted back at her, desperate for his life, "Your family and friends! They'll die if I don't report back!" Weiss froze. Winter could take care of herself, but Klein, Heartwood and Whitely would die without much of a fight. She could count her loved ones on the fingers of her hands and didn’t want to lose any more of them… Gritting her teeth, she slowly pulled her blade back, gripped the line, and began to pull on it; dragging her captor back inside with what little strength she had left. With one final pull, the man grabbed the lowered ramp and pulled himself back onto the bullhead. With deep breaths, he rolled onto his back and laid there as he sucked air into his lungs. "Family first, always predictable, Schnee," he choked out between gasps of air. Suddenly, he found the tip of her weapon pointed right at his neck, a cold hatred in her eyes.

"Do not mistake my compassion for weakness, Gift," she threatened as she pressed the tip against his throat, just enough not to break the skin. She let the threat linger for a few more seconds before she pulled her blade back and hit the door controls, closing up the back from the night sky. The man eventually got to his feet and walked back to the pilot seat to fly them to their destination. Hours passed, and Weiss could see that their destination was not an Atlas base, but rather a massive dreadnaught hovering in the ocean between Solitas and Anima.

The Mantle of Responsibility was the height of Atlas technology. The dreadnaught was the largest of its class, and it was how the fourth assault was getting all their support. Coming into the massive dock on the side, Weiss was anxious to get away from Alkmene Gift and get a shower as soon as possible. Before she could get too far away, she felt a heavy hand on her shoulder that stopped her. "Don't go too far, you're still needed, remember?" he whispered to her ear. She shuddered but he left before she could get any words in otherwise.

Walking off to the entrance of the flight deck, she was met with someone she was not expecting to be on the Dreadnaught. "Winter!" Rushing to her sister, she quickly stopped in front of the waiting woman and snapped a quick salute. "What are you doing here?" Weiss asked once Winter returned the salute.
"I'm here trying to win a war," Winter calmly replied as she took a hard look at her younger sister. "I had heard you died at Ritrr, I'm glad you're okay, Weiss," she said as she reached out and squeezed Weiss's shoulder. Weiss lightly smiled as she looked around a bit and leaned in.

"Did you get my message?" the younger woman asked. Winter nodded but placed her finger to her lips and nodded her head towards the entrance behind her. Understanding, Weiss nodded and walked with Winter down the hall, slowing her steps to keep pace with the limping woman. Silently, they walked for a few moments before Winter spoke.

"Yes, but we can go over the details later. Right now, you need to get some rest, I'll bring you to your room," Winter said with a small smile, "All you need to know is that we're looking into it." Weiss smiled back at her older sister; but as she was looking at her, she was not watching where she was going. Just before they turned the corner, Weiss felt like she ran into a tank. Winter was quick enough to stop her from falling on her back. Looking at what she ran into, she saw a cheery ginger with a bright smile.

"Salutations Specialist Schnee!" Penny said with a wave before she snapped a sharp salute for General Schnee. "General! It's good to see you!" she said happily.

"Penny! What are you doing here?" Weiss asked as she walked up to the woman.

"According to Father and the other council members, I am combat ready!" Penny replied with another salute. "I will be joining you during the next attack on Fort Meihua." Weiss looked at Winter, who simply nodded.

"It was a surprise to us as well. But, Watts is pushing to end this war." Winter put in as Penny simply nodded along with the statement.

"I need to go and prepare now, It is good to see you still alive, Specialist Schnee! I look forward to working together in the future!" Penny said as she waved them goodbye and walked past them. After that, Weiss was brought to her room and Winter walked in with her. It was small, that was for sure. Barely enough space for the bed and a locker with nothing else. Weiss thanked her sister and they shared a hug before she left to take care of other things. Weiss had a lot to work out in her mind, and all before she was supposed to die in Mistral.

Night came, and Winter was inside her room on the Mantle of Responsibility. Rooms for officers had a slight upgrade over what the Specialists had; she had a desk and a tall dresser with enough room to hang her uniform, as well as a tiny personal bathroom. Winter Schnee stood in front of the mirror in her room, staring at her own naked body; with her hair down, she looked like a completely different person. She stared at herself, traced the scars on her body with her cold blue eyes, continuing downwards until she saw a part of her that was not flesh, but metal.

An artificial limb made of plastic and steel encompassed her knee, leg, and foot. She hated it; it was a symbol of her failure to save her men, her soldiers, her friends on the battlefield. With a sigh, she walked towards the small bathroom to prepare for the night. In the small bathroom was a small sink, a mirror, and a shower stall just big enough for a person to stand in. Because of her prosthetic, a plastic chair had been placed in the middle of it.

Sitting down on the chair, she began to remove the clasps and disconnect the limb from her body. A sharp shock of pain rocked up through her thigh as natural and artificial nerves were severed from each other, but the pain only lasted a few moments. Placing the limb on the outside of the
stall, she reached in front of her for a small bag that held her toiletries. Shampoo, conditioner, and body wash were all inside in small tubes that could be squeezed. Instead of any of those, she reached into her bag and pulled out a folded straight razor and stared at it.

No matter how many times Winter saw it, she still admired the craftsmanship that went into the barber’s tool. Made of silver and stainless steel, she traced the small details that must have taken someone countless hours to form by hand for her father. Opening it, she saw her own reflection on the razor’s steel and hated what she saw. As she stared at her father’s personal razor, her other hand gripped her stump of a leg and felt the scars that carved her leg up. Many of them moved and crossed with random patterns from the stump and travelled up her thigh, but inside her thigh, a different tale could be read.

Inside her thigh, straight lines were carved into her leg. The ones closest to her missing limb were fully healed scars, but the closer to her hips they got, the less and less healed they were. The last one on the row was just newly formed scabs. With a deep breath, Winter found a place next to the scabs, an equal distance away from it, and pressed the razor’s edge against her skin. Slowly, she dragged the shaving instrument across her skin and gritted her teeth as the familiar pain flooded her body.

With a steady hand, she felt the familiar sensation of her skin and flesh being sliced open by her own hand. Rich crimson flowed down her porcelain skin and dripped onto the chair she sat on. She finished her cut and held the razor away from her body. She watched the blood flow from her self-inflicted wound and waited. And waited, and waited, but nothing happened. Blood continued to slowly flow out of her body and drip down the drain at the bottom of the stall.

A fist was clenched around the hand holding the razor, and she slammed that fist against the stall wall in anger and frustration as she continued to watch her blood leak onto the chair. "Why won't you heal me..." she whispered to herself. She could not see her Aura knitting her flesh together like it was supposed to, instead, her wound began to clot like a normal person’s. Her Aura was gone, she was left weak and mortal. The strength that she used to get her freedom from her father, the strength that rocketed her through her schooling and through the ranks of the military was gone.

Reaching over, she turned on the water as cold as it could go and watched her blood circle down the drain. She lived while so many died. She was promoted as they were buried. She was given a limb to replace the one she lost as children were forced to grow up, missing a parent. For everything she gained, she would have given so much more if only to trade places with any of them. Instead, she sat here, causing herself harm to try to make herself feel better.

Her father must be laughing his ass off from hell.

Chapter End Notes

So that was a thing. Sorry, it took so long, like always. But, like always, Weiss is always one of the hardest people to write in this story of mine.

Big thanks for StreetAngelJ for all his hard work in editing and proofreading the story.

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo! If you already have, leave a comment! I love reading them and I love replying to them. This story is also posted on FF.net, so if you read over there, come show your support! I'm also on Tumblr (AngryFaceWritings) Come say hi!
As always, thank you for taking time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness!
The Tin Soldiers

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Tin Soldiers

They always said the desert sands of Vacuo were endless, and Midori was beginning to believe them. No matter how many dunes they drove over or as straight of a line they went in, he felt like he was just spinning his wheels. Could be worse, of course, he could be digesting in the stomach of a thousand different Fucking spider Grimm that were the sizes of large dogs. He just hoped he as going the right way, it was surprisingly hard to follow a great big white Nevermore.

After the collective unloading of every bit of ordinance that both armies had brought with them into whatever-the-fuck-that-spider-lady-Grimm that was the size of a large building was, Midori allowed himself a moment of celebration. Cheering with the others as the monstrous Grimm had its head sliced open from Rose's massive scythe; only for the celebrating to be cut off as it's body melted into more of the black goo that created Grimm and thousands of the spiders.

"Get out of here! I'll draw them off! Save as many as you can and leave! That's an order!"

That was the last thing Rose told them before she turned and began to fire at the newly formed horde. Taking her last order, he drove the truck and grabbed as many of his squad as he could before they evacuated the battlefield. As he fled, Midori saw many others driving in random directions just to get away from the horde. Driving as far as he could, they stopped for the night and began to refuel using the fuel cans on the side of the truck as well as take off the heavy missile launchers that were bolted to the back of the truck.

The morning after, they were travelling again; Midori behind the wheel and Sapphi in the passenger seat with her rifle pointed out the window. Her shaven head was scanning the horizon for any sightings of Grimm. In the back, four people were crammed together on two seats designed for one. Violet was currently sitting in the lap of Auburn, her medic bag on her lap as they tried their best to appear professional while in a compromising position.

At least Auburn was doing better than Concador, who looked like his head was about to explode. "Why is your bag so heavy..." he strained out.

"It's designer..." the woman wearing sunglasses and a beret replied sarcastically. Midori picked the woman up while they were fleeing. She folded her massive chain gun into a large purse before she dove in and they took off. She was staring out the window while she mindlessly played with the red and green beads that were in her single caramel lock of hair. The fact that she wore such high-end clothing and had a transformative weapon marked her as a Huntress. A Huntress who had been fighting for a long time, judging by the scars that ran under her sunglasses and nose creating a scarred smirk. He recognised her from the team they rescued before the assault happened.

" Doesn't make it any lighter,"

They kept driving over the dunes and after one particular bump, everyone was forced up out of their seats and came crashing back down. The marksmen cried out as the weight of the weapon-purse landed on his foot. With an annoyed huff, Auburn, of course, spoke up. "Do you even know where you're going?" he asked as he leaned over to the middle of the back seats to try to talk to
Midori. "Is this even the right way to the pick-up spot?"

"We're not going to the pick-up," Midori said tersely as they drove.

"Why the fuck not?" Auburn asked. Everyone turned to the temporary squad leader for the answer.

"'Cause we're looking for Rose."

Silence filled the cabin until Auburn, once again, filled it with his voice. "Are you fucking kidding me?" he cried out as he tried to push his way to the front. "Why the actual fuck are we looking for her?"

"She's our squad leader, in case you forgot."

"She's a bitch!"

"She saved your ass, Auburn!" Midori shot back quickly as he pushed the truck faster.

"How are you planning on finding her? A single person in the middle of the desert! You have better odds at finding a needle in a haystack!"

"I have to try!" Midori shouted back, his anger getting the better of him. Silence filled the air again before Auburn began to laugh like an idiot. Snorting and sucking air in like an idiot. "What!"

"You're fucking stupid man..." he mumbled out as he looked away.

"What!"

"Both of you! Shut it!" Violet shouted as she whipped her head back and forth to try and make eye contact with the two of them. "It's already cramped in here without your massive egos, so shut up!"

The vehicle was filled with silence after the medic's outburst. The heavy silence continued for a long stretch before it was broken by Auburn, again.

"I know why you're doing this..." he said darkly.

"Shut it, Auburn..." Midori growled. His knuckles turned white as he gripped the steering wheel, fighting to keep the speeding vehicle under control.

"No! I know why you're so hell-bent on saving her! It's because of your kid. You couldn't save him so you're trying to save his hero as some sort of, retribution or something stupid like that."

He crossed the line. He was right, Midori was trying to find some solace, a redemption in saving the hero his son looked up to for all of the three days the festival was around. He had never seen his eyes so wide or his determination so pure as when he decided that he wanted to be a Huntsmen after Ruby Rose first appeared on the TV. As true as it was, the last straw was broken and Midori lashed out. Turning in his seat, he lifted himself up and tried to push himself to the back to punch Auburn in the face.

"Don't you ever-"

"MIDORI! PERSON!" Sapphi screamed from the passenger seat. Midori quickly turned back to the wheel when he saw something green in front of them. Slamming on the brakes and swerving to avoid whatever it was, he narrowly avoided whoever he was about to hit. When it finally stopped, everyone swung side to side as the momentum carried them to the verge of tipping over, only for the truck to land back on its wheels. Everyone just looked at each other to make sure they were
okay, each person locking eyes with each other, waiting for someone to mention an injury.

When no one said anything; everyone moved quickly piling out of the truck with their weapons at the ready as they took aim at whoever showed up in front of them so suddenly. Aiming down the sights of his rifle, Midori saw a single man standing in the sands. He wore a lot of black for someone just randomly standing in the middle of the desert; a green scarf was wrapped around his neck with a silver pendant in the middle of it. He stood before them, hands on a cane in front of him. Silver hair waved in the wind and darkened spectacles sat low on his nose.

Next to him stood a woman wearing red armour over a black and red half kimono. She held an impressive sword in one hand with the sheath in the other. A “tail” of black feathers hung from her hip that matched the one that hung off her head, just behind her ear. She hid her face behind a full face white Grimm mask. While he had six weapons trained on him, the man simply locked eyes with Midori before turning his head and nodding in the direction behind him. "The person you are looking for is that way," he called out to them calmly. Midori just stared at him as he came out from behind the truck and began to walk towards him slowly, keeping his rifle trained on the mysterious figures.

"What?"

"Ms Rose is in that direction." the man said again. Lowering his weapon, Midori just stared at him.

"How do you know?"

The man simply gave a small smile. "Because, like her, you possess a simple soul. Just as she has saved countless people, you must save her."

"Why me?"

"Because, the right person in the wrong place, can make all the difference in the world."

"Who are you?" Midori asked. He simply smiled and lifted his one hand off his cane and placed it behind his back in a professional manner.

"The right person, in the wrong place." The older man simply gave a gentlemen's nod and turned to the woman they had picked up when they fled "It’s good to see you again, Ms. Adel, and I hope to see you again after everything is over." With that, he walked towards the masked woman. She turned and slashed at the air with her sword, ripping open a spinning dark red portal which they stepped towards. They all just stared in disbelief at the quick series of events that happened before anyone could really understand what was happening. Turning back to his squad, he looked to them to see if they had any idea of what they just witnessed.

"So..." Concador was the first to speak, "Did we all drink the cactus juice, or was it just me?"

"No, I saw that too..." Violet said as she lowered her rifle and looked around.

"Who the fuck was that?" Auburn asked as he came out from behind his cover.

"Ozpin..." Coco Adel said as she lowered her weapon and took a few steps towards where the strangers once stood.

"Who?"

"Professor Ozpin of Beacon Academy," she said as she looked over to Midori.
"What? But I thought he died during the fall."

"Me too..."

Everyone was quiet for a few moments, struggling to take in the facts of what they just saw. A man, who was supposed to be dead, appeared in front of them, nearly caused them to crash, spewed some nonsense, and then left as suddenly as he appeared. "Okay, so what are we going to do?" Auburn asked as they stood around, unsure of their next step. Midori just looked out over the sands and narrowed his eyes. He took a deep breath and turned back to everyone.

"Load up, we're going!"

"Are you mental?" Auburn asked as everyone opened the doors and got back into their seats. "You're just going to listen to him? Just like that?"

"You got a better plan?" he asked as he just walked past the rifleman and got into the driver's seat. "You either come with us, or you can walk." Midori started the engine and Auburn made his decision real fast after that. With everyone back in their seats, Midori sped off in the direction Ozpin had pointed them towards with renewed determination. As they drove in that direction, the hours passed in silence until something caught his eye. The sunlight was reflecting off of something, and he drove straight towards it and stopped just before it.

Everyone got out of the vehicle and spread out, searching for anything in the desert sands. Midori walked towards where he saw the reflection with Auburn next to him. Walking up, he began to brush the sand away and found some kind of bladed weapon he did not recognise. Pulling on it, he pulled it out of the ground, along with a long, pale arm. "Holy fuck!" Auburn shouted as he stumbled back and held his hand over his mouth. Midori just held it up and shook his head as he saw many small cuts running up and down the limb.

"Hey! We found someone!" Sapphi shouted over the sands. "He got fucked up and his arms are missing!" Well, that solved one mystery. Midori dropped the severed limb and rushed to where Sapphi and Violet were. The medic was already crouched down next to the body by the time he got there. Looking over Violet, he saw something that made his stomach roll. A man was laying on his back, his arms cut off from above his elbows and a large gouge on his exposed chest. But the man's face was the worst part.

His face was scratched up to all hell, lines in every direction cut into his face, but they were all in sets of four, meaning someone had clawed his face. The next thing he noticed was that his eyelids were limp inside his skull; and with the larger lines of dried blood going down his face like painted tears, he guessed his eyes were not inside his head either. His skin was red and peeling. He saw blisters forming under the burned skin, meant he had been laying out here for a long while.

"He's still breathing. Just barely though," Violet said as she pulled away from the man and looked up at Midori, "I don't think he'll last the hour..."

"Midori!" A shout took his attention. Looking over across the way, he saw Coco waving her arms around, in her hands was the unmistakable shape of a large scythe. Breaking out into a run, he sprinted towards the woman and Concador as he was digging with his hands. On Midori's heels was the rest of the team. In the sands, half buried, was a woman with dark hair wrapped in a red cloak. She had a massive wound in her side and cuts all over her skin. Violet pushed him out of the way and crouched next to her.

The medic began to check her over quickly, she forced her eyelid open and shone a flashlight into it. Her eyes were bloodshot as she refused to keep her head straight. Black lines spidered across her
skin and up her neck. Her breathing was shallow and rapid as she looked at all of them and weakly tried to push them away, mumbling something. "She's been poisoned and badly hurt, we need to get her to the pick-up now!" Violet yelled as the efforts to dig her out were doubled.

Just as they pulled her free of the sands, a loud cry echoed through the desert and a shadow suddenly descended upon them. Landing with a heavy thud, a large Grimm stood before them and screamed in their direction. It looked like a massive vulture with a white bird mask. It spread its massive wings in a threatening manner as it dug at the sands with its claws and grabbed the man they found first, then took to the sky, calling out as it went. It happened so fast that not everyone had time to pull their weapons out before it left. "This day just keeps getting more and more fucked up...." Auburn said as he lifted Rose over his shoulder and the squad ran towards the truck.

Coco and Auburn hopped into the back of the truck as Violet and Concador laid Rose across the back seats. As they moved her, she continued to move around and make sounds that could not be deciphered. Violet pulled some bandages and a cloth from her bag when Rose suddenly began to lash out, trying to escape from them while yelling and screaming about something they could not see. "Hold her down!" Violet yelled out as Sapphi turned in her seat and held her legs as Concador tried to hold her arms down.

He was holding one hand while he reached across her body to try and hold her other arm when she lashed out and sank her teeth into his arm. He screamed out as he pulled his arm away and waved it in the air. "She fucking bit me! Am I going to catch this?" he asked as he made an awkward move to hold her arm so she did not attack anyone else.

"No, now shut up and hold her still," Violet said as she mounted her hips to stop Ruby from moving as much as she could. She continued to fight against them as the truck drove through the desert, making an already difficult task nearly impossible. "Damn it, Rose! Wake up!" She struggled to clean the wound that was currently oozing out black, viscous fluid. "She's going to bleed out before we get to the pick-up. I don't know how to stop this.." she said as she pressed more bandages against the puncture wound.

"Use her Stimulant!" Midori called out from the driver's seat, "She said it keeps her Aura stable, maybe it'll help the bleeding,"

Violent began to search through Rose's pouches until she found the vial of milky white liquid. Grabbing a fresh syringe from her pack, she pushed the thin needle through the rubber top and began to pull some out. "Damn it, how much does she use?" Violet asked, but Midori just shrugged and everyone else just shook their heads. Deciding on an amount, she pulled out a little bit more and then pulled her sleeve out of the leather vambrace and pushed it above her elbow to reveal the scabbed and infected injection site inside her elbow.

Pushing the thin steel instrument into her skin, she pushed the drug into her system and pulled it out. Rose's whole body seized for a few moments before suddenly relaxing. Everyone sighed in relief as she finally stopped fighting against the people trying to help her. Violet reached up and pressed her fingers against the woman's throat and held it there for a few moments before her eyes went wide and pressed her hand over her mouth. "Fuck! fuck! fuck! fuck!"

"What?"

"She's gone into cardiac arrest!" she shouted as she tilted Rose's head back and breathed into her mouth and started the chest compressions.

"Are you fucking kidding me! How much did you give her?" Midori shouted as he continued to drive. He was pushing the engine as fast as it could go as he sped towards the pick-up location to
get them home. "Someone start shouting into the radio! Tell them we're coming and we need help!"

Sapphi pulled out the small radio and began to go through the channels, calling out for anyone as Violet struggled to hold onto Rose's life. The minutes felt like hours as Violet walked Concador through the steps while she needed to take a rest.

Finally, Sapphi managed to get a hold of someone over the radio through the terrible static. The car stopped and Sapphi pulled a green smoke flare from her vest and popped it. "Hold on Rose, help's on the way..." Midori said as he looked at the limp form of his squad leader that was laying on the back seat as others tried to keep her alive. Seconds ticked by as they waited for someone to save them.

And waited.

And waited.

Chapter End Notes

Oooohhh!

Who is an asshole who lives in the north!

Ang-ry-fa-ce!

There is only one more chapter left in part 1 of How Could You Be My Enemy! Who's excited?

Big thanks to StreetAngeJ for continuing to be the best person and editing this late night ramblings into coherent sentences.

I am also looking for someone who would be willing to work with me and create a cover art for this story, willing to pay for a commission! Let me know!

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo! If you already have, leave a comment! I love reading them and I love replying to them. This story is also posted on FF.net. So if you read there, come show your support! I also have a Tumblr (AngryFaceWritings) Come say hi or something!

And as always, thank you for taking time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness!
He was fast. Faster than she had ever seen anyone move before; blink and he would be gone. It took all of her focus to make sure he did not surprise her. He was faster than any mortal could be.

He was skilled. Decades of training and battle had turned his body into a living weapon. One that could walk into the middle of a war and walk out unscathed.

He was powerful. Such was expected with dealing with a man such as Ozpin; Headmaster of Beacon Academy, Protector of the Relic, and Keeper of the Light.

But Cinder, she was a god incarnate.

He tried to defend against her will and her might, but he was just like every other mortal man. He was blown back by the strength of the Fall Maiden. The dome he erected around himself shattered and he rolled across the darkened floor, close to the machine that had kept the previous Fall Maiden on the cusp of death. Keeping her alive for just long enough so that Cinder could absorb the final bits of her power. Lowering herself to the ground, with the soft clicks of glass on marble she began to walk towards the man as he was struggling just to get to his feet.

"Such arrogance," Cinder repeated as she stood before him. Ozpin cleared his throat as he stood before her. "Is this how you were going to save humanity? With blindfolds and careful words?" she asked him as he righted himself and adjusted his suit. With a deep breath, he took his weapon in his hand and came for her once more. The sparks of their weapons colliding ignited the air around them. Dashing to and from each other, never giving up any ground. The whole world could be their
war zone and it would still be too confined for them.

She materialised lightning in her hand and shot electricity at the silver-haired man, who deflected it using his cane. The power behind the attack was enough to push him back several feet before he held his ground, his face tight with determination. With a shift in his stance, he threw her attack back at her; throwing her off her feet with the power behind the counter. Catching herself before she fell over, she slid across the ground, leaving behind melted marble in her wake. Righting herself, she smirked as flames began to erupt from her hands, ready for the next attack.

This was everything she ever wanted. She wanted strength, the strength to never bow to anyone she did not want to. The strength to make people bow to her and obey her every whim; the strength to hold the whole world in the palm of her hand and decide what she wanted to do with it. Never again will she crawl. Never again will she beg. Never again will she rely on others, or on their twisted form of kindness. She flaunted this strength that was now hers at Ozpin, the last guardian of Vale, and swung her hand at him, letting a line of flames cleave its way through the air towards him.

She wanted to be feared; to be able to walk down the street and know that with only a single glance, people would wither away from her, turn their eyes away to try and avoid her ire. With a single word, she had the ability to form armies and just as easily break them. He was doing such a good job at hiding it, but she saw the fear in his brown eyes. The fear of failure, of not doing enough to stop the coming storm that she had become. The gentle clicks of her heels filled the air; even the silence was afraid of her now.

She wanted to be powerful; to tear apart reality and bend it to her every whim. To have Remnant shake under her feet with every step she took. The power to will things in and out of existence at her very thought. With her power, she waved her arms around, creating a complex glyph; willing a great pillar of flame to drown Ozpin in fire. The man erected another green dome to protect himself. This is what she wanted, the only things she ever needed. The strength to win any fight and the fearful presence to control everyone around her.

The power to change her destiny.

The conflict continued on in the underbelly of Beacon, through the vaults and catacombs that housed a thousand secrets and lost treasures to be guarded by their keepers. They arrived at a massive round chamber with a spire coming out from a bottomless pit to an endless ceiling. One of the grand foundations of the CCT tower in Beacon. Cinder took a brief moment to admire the craftsmanship of such a build eighty years ago, before closing in on her target. Ozpin was breathing deeply, one hand holding his side in pain with the other holding his cane to her, doing his best to look threatening.

Just as she was about to resume her assault on the man, he stopped suddenly and stared out past her. His eyes scanning something she could not see, he turned to follow whatever he was watching; but Cinder kept her eyes on the man himself, she may have these powers, but he was still a man not to be trifled with. Suddenly, he took his eyes away and looked down to his cane, then back at her. His stance shifted suddenly and he stood before her, his guard down with no intentions of continuing the fight.

With one last surprise from the white-haired man, he simply spread his arms out and fell backwards, directly into the black pit that was the CCT foundations. Cinder rushed to the edge and peered into the endless black to try and search the man out. She saw nothing save for darkness and the thick pole that supported the tower above them in the middle of the pit. With nothing to go on, Cinder moved her arms and manipulated the Dust around her and crafted her bow with its glass
arrows. Pouring her power into the arrow, she fired true into the blackness and waited.

The seconds stretched on for what seemed like an eternity when finally an inferno stormed towards the heavens from the pit. Satisfied, Cinder turned and walked away; Ozpin was out of the picture, now it was time for the end. She made her way to the top of the tower with great haste, as she needed to be there. The Dragon roared at her and she smiled lightly, "Shh, this is your home now..." The elevator dinged, and a warrior stormed out.

Pyrrha Nikos, the Invincible Girl, the Mistral Champion and Ozpin's chosen Guardian of Vale. She had earned every one of her titles, her strength and skills were unmatched in Cinder's eyes. In another world, she would have been worthy to receive the Fall Maiden's gift, but not now, not ever. She fought with everything she had. If Cinder had been a lesser person, she would have had a tough fight on top of the Beacon Tower. Cinder was reminded once more, as she willed her Dust arrow to break apart and reform at her will, that Pyrrha was a simple mortal, and Cinder was a god.

"It's unfortunate that you were promised a power that was never truly yours. But take comfort in knowing that I will use it in ways you would have never imagined."

The Chosen girl looked up at Cinder with determination in her eyes as she spoke her last words to her killer, "Do you believe in destiny?"

"Remember, Number Five. You exist to be used, to be sacrificed like wood or stone. Destined to be a stepping stone for me. Know your place, or you will be replaced." A voice echoed in her mind, the man who sired her, the man who kept her in chains and darkness since the day she was born. This was why she needed strength, to be feared, to be powerful; so she could change her destiny into something that she wanted.

"Yes."

Cinder took her life like one breathes, naturally and without thought. She watched as the crimson-haired woman struggled to breathe, dying slowly in front of her. Her body went limp and Cinder caught her head and watched as her final breath left her body. Holding onto the circlet, she watched as her body turned from flesh to ash, her very existence being erased in front of her eyes. When nothing remained, she dropped the metal headband at her grave. Gone was that girl, ashes rested in her place.

"Pyrrha!"

"My Queen!"

Cinder was shocked into consciousness by someone's wail echoing through the cold halls of Salem's castle. An insatiable itch hit her eye socket and Cinder gritted her teeth as her fingers dove into the hollow hole in her face. It took every inch of her willpower not to scratch away at the back of her skull. With her fingers ghosting over the lip of her socket, she felt the scars of her flesh before pulling away, but the burning sensation lingered until she took several deep breaths and waited for it to pass.

The girl in the red cloak, Ruby Rose, did this to her. Rent her flesh and stole her eye. Hot anger flared through her body as she lifted her left arm and saw the scarred over flesh once more. It took all of her strength to form a fist and her hand shook as she did so. That one girl did what no one else has done for a long time, made Cinder Fall bleed. She did more than just that, she took away everything that Cinder worked so hard to gain, and trapped it within her body.
Her strength was weakened by her scarred flesh. Her fear was halted by her wounded pride. Her power stolen by being shown that even gods could bleed. Cinder Fall now understood the legend of the man with wax wings. She had wanted the power so badly, she did not notice it trying to swallow her whole. Not only was she reminded of her hubris that day, she was reminded of her past; the one that she thought she escaped that day in the fire.

A shudder coursed through her as she recalled that man's voice calling her Number Five. That was her name before, a simple number. That man abducted women and raped them so she could be born, all in the name of some sort of prophecy that she knew nothing about. By the end of it, eleven women were taken from their homes and families so they could each birth a child. Cinder was the fifth born in that way. And out of the eleven children born, only three left that building alive.

"My Queen!"

Another wail made its way into her room, the original cause for her to wake from her nightmare. She pulled her red, asymmetrical dress on and made sure her mask was on before she left her room. Her glass heels echoed down the stone halls and winding passages. She followed the cries and soon remembered where she heard this voice before; Tyrian Callows, the mad zealot. She followed the mad cries until she arrived in the Great Hall where Salem herself was already seated at the head of the glass table.

The calls for Salem were getting closer as Cinder looked between the open door and the woman herself. While the woman with white skin and dark veins running the lengths of her arms and across her face sat in her seat, Cinder could tell that she was not happy about something. Her eyes were narrowed and she was staring at the door, waiting for Tyrian to enter in his own time. Cinder knew better than to speak to her like while she was fuming like this.

Minutes passed as Tyrian's calls continued to get closer and closer. Finally, the man himself stumbled into the room, and Cinder understood why it took him so long and why he kept calling her name. The first thing she noticed was the lack of arms; two stumps rested on either side of his body, his limbs had been severed from above his elbows. The next thing she noticed was his face, sliced and ripped open with dried blood covering every inch of it. Next was the holes where his eyes should be, limp eyelids were crusted in blood as he searched for his queen in the room. His white clothing was stained red with blood, his skin was blistered and burned horribly. Angry red infection lines spidered up from his stumps as his tail waved limply around him. That too was cut apart and covered in dried blood. "My Queen!" he called out as he tried to find her in his blindness. He waited a few moments before turning around and was about to leave the room to continue his search when Salem calmly and quietly answered him by saying his name.

"My Queen!" he rushed towards her, only to run into the table without his sight. He fell to his knees and cried out in pain as he began to shuffle on his knees around the table and chairs, using his stumps to try and navigate himself towards the being of his devotion. "I did it! I killed her! Just as you asked me to!"

"What happened?" Salem stood from her seat and walked so that he was directly in front of her. She stared down at him with vile disgust in her black and red eyes.

"I cornered her in the desert; she was fast and strong, stronger than I thought. She is shattered, broken."

"Broken?"
"Yes! She screams at herself and talks in different tones. Then someone else wore her body to fight me! That red *bitch* got lucky, I lost my limbs and my eyes, but you have never left my sight! I hit her with my tail, my stinger! I poisoned her! She won't be a nuisance to you any longer... no longer... Have I done well? have I pleased you?" He bowed his head in worship to his goddess as he rambled on about his fight with Ruby Rose. Cinder was still having troubles believing that that little girl could do this to one of Salem's fiercest warriors.

"Yes, you have." Tyrian grinned a bloody grin as he listened to her praise. "But you are of no use to me anymore. Leave."

His smile shattered as he looked up at her direction, searching for her as he shook his head. "No..."

On the stumps of his arms, he began to crawl towards her, leaving black smears of old, infected blood on the stone floor below him. "No no no no no no no! please! My queen! My Goddess! I have devoted my whole life to you! please! don't cast me aside, I'll do anything for you! Anything you want, your wish is my duty!"

"Anything?" Salem was prepared to see how far his devotion was rooted.

"Anything!"

Salem looked away from the broken, blind man and locked eyes with Cinder. They shared silent words with each other before the dark queen turned back to her servant. "Then burn."

In an instant, Tyrian was consumed in a hellfire that Cinder had summoned. He launched himself to his feet and began to scream out in pain and horror. His severed tail lashed out in every direction as his stumps tried to put out the fires that were eating away at what was left of his flesh. In a blind panic, he sprinted towards where his Goddess stood, looking for a last embrace from his divine being; but she simply sidestepped and he continued on his way right to the window.

With his all his blind momentum carrying him, he shattered the window overlooking the birthing pits and began to plummet to the bottom. As he fell, Cinder thought his screaming turned to joyous laughter as he neared the bottom. By the time Cinder reached the broken window to see where he landed, the laughter had stopped with a muted thud. Gazing down, she saw the firey corpse lying next to a pit filled with the black fluid that the creatures Grimm were born from. She watched as a large, clawed arm reached out of the pit, grabbed the dead man and dragged him into the deep to be feasted upon in comfort.

"Never underestimate the usefulness of others, Cinder. But always remember when to hold onto a tool, and when to let go of dead weight." The two women stood in silence, overlooking all of Salem's realm; the eerie purple glow of the Gravity Dust that permeated all that she ruled, the glow of the shattered moon that highlighted the destroyed land from some war or battle that time had forgotten, and the pools of inky black ichor from which creatures of Grimm slowly emerged.

Without looking at the Fall Maiden, Salem spoke once more, "You didn't kill him, did you?" She knew this was not a question. So she stayed silent as she stared down at the pit where Tyrian was being consumed by blackness. "How?" was Cinder’s only response.

With a deep breath, she collected her thoughts and told Salem of how Ozpin had thrown himself down into the foundation pit and how she ensured that he would not return. When she was done, Salem looked up to the moon and studied it for a few moments before she narrowed her eyes and proclaimed, "He cheated."

"What?" Cinder looked over to Salem, who was already walking back into the room.
"Ozpin looked into the Tides of Calamity and found the path he must take." Her red eyes locked onto Cinder's and she felt a familiar chill run down her spine as her eyes glowed red in anger. "That man does not do anything without looking into every possible outcome first. In all the time I've known him and with every iteration of his soul, he has only once chosen the wrong path, and he has learned from his mistake." The glow from her eyes died down as she crossed her hands in front of herself. "But you have more important concerns at the moment, your last tool has failed."

It took Cinder a few moments to realise who she was talking about. "Mercury?"

"Not only is your assassin dead, but he has made the sister even stronger."

"He failed, even after your gift?" Salem was silent for a few moments before she began to walk to her chair and took her place at the head of the table.

"He failed because of my gift," Salem began, "I did not have high hopes for him in the first place. So I thought I would use him in my own way. When you look at the creatures of Grimm, what do you see?" Cinder narrowed her eye as she thought about it. "Beasts. Mindless, aimless, soulless. Nothing but a horde drawn by emotions. But imagine if they were more, imagine if they had choice, knowledge, the power to not only destroy but to create as well. Imagine Grimm, with souls."

Cinder's eye went wide when she realised what she was talking about. "What makes Huntresses and Huntsmen so uniquely qualified to hunt Grimm? It's their Aura, the manifestation of the soul that separates them from the rest of their kind. Before, it would take hundreds of Grimm just to eliminate a single Huntsmen. Imagine if a Beowolf had stone skin or an Ursa had the ability to teleport, there would be no need for the thousands, just a handful. Doctor Merlot was on the right track, his Lusus Naturae were the first steps to this goal, but once again, Ozpin has gotten in the way."

"You have been idle for too long now, Cinder. I believe you have recovered enough to be useful again. Go to Mistral, help Watts wake the Ancient one, open the door, and collect the Relic."

Cinder bowed and accepted her new order, just as she turned to leave the chamber, Salem called out to her once more. "Do not fail me Cinder, I have kept my end of the deal. I have given you the strength, the fear, and the power you asked for. Now bring me the Relics, or you will be sacrificed."

"Yes, Lady Salem," Cinder said with one last bow before she left the room, her glass heels echoing through the halls as she prepared for her trip to Mistral, to spill even more blood in her and her Master's name.

Salem watched as the Fall Maiden left the room; the gentle breeze of wind causing her cape to flutter against her cold, white skin. The gentle chimes of her hair ornaments filled her ears as she stood from her seat and began to return to her personal chambers. Closing the door behind her, she walked further into the room. The walls were filled with paintings of what the world once was, of heroes she had personally known and watched as artists exaggerated even the most mundane tasks they had performed.

Ignoring the history that adorned her walls, she made her way to a beautifully crafted chess board. Its pieces scattered were around the battlefield, a game that had been paused for decades. Walking up to it, Salem examined the lines of attack and walls of defence that both sides had put up, only for them to crumble with the perfect counter time and time again. Reaching over the lines, Salem picked up the black queen. The piece was carved from pure obsidian with a purple glow coming from its centre, pulsing with magical energy.
Placing the black queen in the middle of the battlefield, she made the move that would put the white king in check, as well as threaten the white rook and the white knight pieces. They as well were carved from pure marble with a pulsing white core; the craftsmanship lost in time a millennia ago. Satisfied with the move, she left the black and white board and walked up to the window to gaze upon the shattered moon that encompassed the whole sky. She knew the exact number of shards that hung in orbit around the planet, she still remembers the day he destroyed it.

With a deep breath, she stared out into the endless expanse that was the sky and narrowed her eyes. She knew he was alive, she always knew when he died and when he was reborn. It was a link between the two, one born from the constant ebb and flow of war, blood, peace and unity. Somewhere out there, she knew he was looking up at the moon, the same as her. "Your move, Ozpin."

_I don't intend to wage war._

_Wars are fought by warriors._

_Massacres, though-_  

_Those are fought by monsters._

_I will stain your white flags_  

_Red_  

_-M.A.W_

Chapter End Notes

So that ending quote I pulled out of the deep hole that is Tumblr. I chased it down to a Tumblr user named dvoyd, so (I think) That quote belongs to them.

And there you have it! The ending of part 1! Man, what a wild ride that was, and I thank you all for coming with me. I really wish I could thank each and everyone who has ever left a Kudo or a comment, but since I can't do that, I'll just have to go with this:

THANK YOU, EVERYONE, FOR EVERY BIT OF LOVE YOU HAVE SHOWN ME AND MY STORY!!!!!!!

Now, just because part 1 is over, doesn't mean you can remove them bookmarks or subscribes, because I will be posting one more chapter at a later date to give a brief preview of Part 2 as well as rewrites of the first few chapters as my skills have improved in leaps and bounds since I had begun.

In the meantime, I will be taking a small break, but that doesn't mean I'll be idle! Along with the chapter rewrites, I will be working on a few little projects that will help cleanse my pallet in a way. That includes a few one-shots and a story based on
Destiny! So if you're a fan of the game or my writing, come take a gander when it comes out!

As always, a massive thanks to StreetAngelJ for somehow making sense of my word vomit and presenting it in a story that actually makes sense. Without his help, this story would be nowhere near as good as it would be otherwise.

To everyone who has subscribed, left kudos, commented and just peeked into this story. Thank you so much for your support! Without you, this story would never have taken off or grown to such a massive fan favourite. Without you guys, this story would never have made it to the front page, let alone the number 1 spot on the Yang/Neo relationship tag!

If you enjoyed, please leave a Kudo! If you already have, please leave a comment! I love reading them and I love replying to them. This story is also posted on FF.net under the same name. If you read over there, come show your support! I also have a Tumblr (Angryfacewritings) Some come say Hi!

And once again, thank you for taking time out of your busy days for over an entire year to read my slice of madness, and I hope to see all of you again for part 2.
Blake watched Yang as she used the towel to wipe the sweat from her forehead and neck. Her skin glistened under the bright lights above them as the people around them began to get up and started to return the training equipment back to its places. With one last check to see if anyone was watching them, Blake began to walk towards the blonde brawler. "Hey," she spoke softly. Yang turned around and for a split second, and Blake saw the light in her eyes when she looked at her, but just as fast as it came, it left. Replaced by a dim hurt in her lavender eyes.

"Hey."

"How are you feeling?"

Yang smiled as she showed off her new arm, flexing the slim metallic fingers and turning her wrist to show off the movements. "Pretty good. I still get pains sometimes, but I manage to push through them." A small smirk formed on her full lips and Blake wished she could control her heart for just a few moments. "Thanks again for the arm, It's nice to feel even again." She put her arm down and stretched her shoulders by pushing her chest out and groaning lightly.

Blake had to look away while she did that, the signature small orange tank top only covered so much of her body, making it hard to think straight. After a few quiet moments, Blake spoke up. "Yang, back when we were fighting, I just want you to know that what I said was true..."

Yang had grown quiet and forced herself not to look at Blake. Instead, she was looking at the bench she was standing in front of that had her jacket hanging off of it. "I know..." she whispered back.

"I love you, Yang."

The blonde just closed her eyes and Blake saw her jaw tense up a few times before she whispered again, "I know, Blake..."

"Do you love me?"

"I'm with Neo, Blake."

"That's not what I asked..."

Jaune stood defiantly in the middle of the battle, his tools of death dripping with crimson essence. The dead created an arena around him, bodies carved from his swords and shields. No one will push past him this night. He alone will hold the flank against his enemy. "This is Arc. I still hold the checkpoint, they won't be coming this way anytime soon. We need to take out those heavy
Paladins to the east," the Knight-Spartan called into the comm network that was set up.

"Understood, Sir. Stand-by for new orders," came a clear voice of one of the officers in the command post.

As Jaune waited, the battle continued all around him. He saw streams of black smoke choking the night sky, lit up by the flames from weapons of war. Suddenly, a series of explosions rocked the ground as low flying Bullheads did a bombing run across the city, dropping weaponized Dust canisters out of their cargo holds and destroying large chunks of the city. The man raised his shield to block the flying debris coming towards him.

Standing back up, he saw streams of white tracking the ships, trying to stop them before they came back around for another attack. He was about to take an overwatching position when the comm network lit up with several people screaming out about something. It was too chaotic to keep track of a single voice in the confusion; only when his officer from command cut through the chatter did he find out what was happening out in the rest of the city.

"Sir, we got reports of someone coming your way real fast. She broke through every single defensive line up, they were going so fast. Be prepared for something big..."

"Understood!"

The sound of a screaming Bullhead pulled his attention back to the battle at hand. In the sky, he saw that one of the Bullheads was speeding right towards him too fast for him to get to cover. Crouching down, he hid behind most of his shield to block as much as he could. But no high-speed, high-penetration rounds came for him. Instead, he watched as a lone figure made an impossible leap into the air and landed on top of the speeding air vehicle. The next second, it exploded in a brilliant ball of flames that landed all around him.

In front of him, the figure landed on their feet, and Jaune was met with a furious gaze from aqua eyes.

"I know it was you that did that." Weiss stood before Alkmene in his tent. "You ruined the chance to save those people! If you and your little cult hadn’t gotten involved..." Her voice was quiet enough that if soldiers passed the tent, all they would think was that Weiss was yelling at the man.

Not that it was far from the truth, but the less information that gets leaked, the better. The man in question looked up from the table, where he was halfway through his meal on a thin metal plate.

"No cause comes without sacrifice, Schnee," he said while holding a bit of his food at her; a bit of chicken speared at the end of his fork.

"They were just soldiers, ignorant of your hand in all of this. They didn't deserve that end."

Weiss was about to continue her tirade when a sudden burst of weapons fire echoed through the air. The two soldiers paused their argument to listen in order to make sure they both heard the same thing. A second stream of bullets and cries followed suit. A firefight had broken out in the middle of their camp. Running to their weapons, Weiss pulled her rapier to her side as Gift racked the breach of his rifle and switched the safety off. The two of them rushed to the entrance of the tent when a dark figure walked in.

The person was tall; all features were hidden behind mottled black and grey clothing. A full face Grimm mask covered their face with a hood over their head to hide their hair. Their forearms were
covered in painted black steel with dark red lines running up the lengths, matching the intricate patterns on their mask. Weiss acted instantly with a thrust of her weapon. The blade was caught in assailant's hand. Weiss tried to pull her blade free; but it would not budge from their grip, despite only holding onto the blade with their gloved hand.

Whoever this was yanked suddenly, causing Weiss to lose her balance. A swift kick connected to her stomach, forcing the air from her lungs as another kick blocked her vision. Weiss was knocked onto her back with such ease, she needed a second just to register what had happened. When she got up, her stomach protested against the movements, but she pushed through the pain. Looking up, she saw that the unknown assailant, who had just disarmed the Specialist in mere seconds, was currently going after Alkmene Gift.

The person grabbed the barrel of the rifle with their hand as a round was fired, but if it affected them, they did not show any of it. A strong enough Aura could do that. As the rifle was torn from his grip, the person reached back for a mighty punch, and Weiss saw a blade spring out from the gauntlet.

The man with ashen hair got up from his seat and walked towards her. She wanted to get out of his way, but she was stronger than him, she needed to be the bigger person. "I hope you use your gift well, Cinder," he told her callously as he turned to look back at the woman he had presented her with. She was still on the floor, blood leaking from her mouth as she tried her best to get to her feet using one hand. Eventually, she managed to stand on her own, albeit it still shaking from what trauma she had endured at their hands.

"Brother mine, we need to leave if we want to get to the station on time!" his sister called out from the hallway. Ash simply smiled and turned back to the Fall maiden.

"Coming, Sister dear!" he called past Cinder. Looking back down at her, she could see herself in the reflection of his sunglasses as he leaned in close. "Remember who gave you this gift, my Maiden. And remember who asked us to help you."

"I don't need your help," Cinder snapped back at him.

He just gave a soft chuckle as he scratched his cheek lightly. "Of course, but what kind of person would I be if I didn't give my offerings to you?" Cinder narrowed her eye at him as Ember called out to him once more from outside the door. "Regardless of everything, Cinder. Try not to fail again. After all, you more than anyone knows that everything burns..." He then leaned in close to her; she could feel his breath on her skin and she felt disgusted by his presence. He pressed his lips to her scarred cheek in a quick, fluttering kiss; before his whisper entered her ear, "Everyone burns..."

She descended down a staircase built of bodies, blood and bone. Her red cape leaving trails of crimson that fluttered past her as she walked towards her goal. "Why do you fight me? I gave you everything you needed to survive. The strength to kill, the will to wage war after war upon the world. Everything I've done was for you!" The crimson woman stood before her and spread her arms out, as red petals filled her vision and scattered to the winds in order to cover the world.

"I will paint the world red like roses. I will flood the heavens and drown the hells in red. I will kill
the light and the dark beyond that. I will proclaim War-Eternal upon all that exists. If anyone, anything, steps in the way of my Crimson Crusade, then my words will carry to every inch of the world: You will be my enemy!"

Chapter End Notes

And here we go!

So this is the REAL last chapter of HCYBME. The sequel is called: You Will Be My Enemy. So look for that coming late December, early January.

If you were looking for a reason to reread the story, but can't get past how badly it's written; good news everyone! My editor and I have been working on updating all the original chapters into something that is more in line with the last half of the story. Think of it as a high-definition remake! So far, we're up to chapter 7. As more chapters are updated, I will announce it.

Big thanks to StreetAngelJ for continuing to be an awesome person and edit and proofread all of my stuff.

If you enjoyed it, leave a kudo! If you already have, leave a comment! I love reading them and I love replying to them. I would really really like to know your thoughts on the story as a whole and what you're expecting in part 2. There is a slight problem with FF.net at the moment, so when it's fixed, it will be posted there as soon as I can. I also have a Tumblr, (AngryFaceWritings)

And as always, thank you for taking time out of your busy days to read my slice of madness.

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