The Heiress and the Unnatural

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Summary

Weiss receives a letter asking her to meet a girl she barely knows behind the school on Senior Prom. One accident later, and she gets swept up into a hidden world of monstrous creatures and the fanatics who hunt them. Can love and friendship win out when the world is out to get you?

Notes

This story was inspired by the fic "You're Beautiful My Lady (And You're Blood Is Delicious Too)" by Lolpuppy101. Still, this is my story, at least as much as BEAUTY AND THE BEAST is Disney's story, except for the characters which are owned by Rooster Teeth, and the mythology which is mostly stolen from SUPERNATURAL, and HIGHLANDER but I ripped other folks' works off too.
• Inspired by You're Beautiful My Lady (And You're Blood Is Delicious Too) by Lolpuppy101
The Beginning

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own RWBY, SUPERNATURAL, HIGHLANDER, or anything I am ripping off here.

I also don't own the images, they're just stuff I found online.

Why am I doing this? Weiss asked herself. There she was, trudging around behind the school—which practically meant walking into a swamp, given where the school was situated—on Prom night to meet a girl she barely knew. She was practically the enacting the opening scene of a slasher movie.

Weiss stopped under the only available street light. In the distance, she could make out the football field. If it wasn’t for the almost full moon, she’d be standing in the last patch of light for miles. That was probably why she wasn’t already caught.

Weiss pulled out her phone, checking the time. If Ruby didn’t show herself in ten minutes, she was leaving. As she did this, she got a look at the corsage on her wrist. It made her remember . . .

Weiss was coming back to her locker from another unpleasant day. It was Monday; Prom was on Friday, and every male without a girlfriend (along with a few who did, for now) in the entire school had been pestering her for a date. Weiss didn’t have a lot of patience to begin with, and she was rapidly running out. She practically screamed when she saw another note with a rose taped to it on her locker.

Last year, at least that buffoon Jaune had had the guts to speak to her directly. She couldn’t stand stunts like this. When she examined the note, however, it surprised her.

Dear Weiss,

I know we haven’t gotten along the best, and I want to change that. Please meet me behind the school at 8:30 on Prom Night.
Weiss was more than a little confused by the request. She knew who Ruby was, of course, a highly intelligent, russet-haired girl who’d been bumped two grades up and was often her classmate. Ruby seemed as though she was on a perpetual sugar-high, always running around to and from every class—which made her habit of falling asleep in Literature kind of ridiculous. Granted, a lot of students nodded off in Port’s class, but that wasn’t the same thing.

Ruby also seemed to want to be everyone’s best friend, especially Weiss’. The two had literally bumped into each other the first day, and Weiss had reacted with one of her usual blow-ups. She felt a little bad about that now as Ruby had profusely apologized and was always trying to be helpful and friendly to her, in an awkward sort of way.

Usually, scarring people off didn’t bother Weiss; it gave them less power over her. Maybe it was because Ruby had no obvious endgame or because the girl didn’t seem to assume that Weiss should automatically like her and want to shower her with money and popularity. It was kind of endearing.

So, when Weiss saw the note taped to her locker, she felt curious, and half-heartedly considered meeting her. The rose was white, something only Jaune had also thought to do. Everyone else offered bright red roses, which were beginning to hurt her eyes.

At lunch that day, Weiss discussed the matter with her friends: Pyrrha and Neptune. And Sun, but Weiss wasn’t overly fond of the blond boy. She only really spent any time with him because he was Neptune’s boyfriend. As usual, Sun had given an enthusiastic support of the idea. Pyrrha and Neptune, though had been more cautious, staring at each other before answering.

“I don’t see any harm in it,” Pyrrha said, at last.

“Just go if you’ve got a cut or anything,” Neptune added. “Blood kind of . . .bothers her.”

Odd, but not the most unusual hang-up. Given that the trio were better friends with Ruby than she was (really, most of Weiss’ social circle were her friends’ friends), the heiress decided to trust them.

Then came Prom night. Weiss had a good time. Dancing and laughing with her classmates, basking in the moment. It was the sort of thing she’d only seen in the gushy movies that Pyrrha’s made her watch.

To cap the night off, she was voted Prom Queen while Neptune became King. Unsurprising, given that he was most popular guy in their class, despite his sexual orientation (the Florida Gulf Coast was far from the worst place to be openly bisexual, but it wasn’t perfect either). The pair danced under the spotlight, and it was perfect. At least until Weiss heard the whispering.

“I wonder how much her old man paid to get her that crown.”

“I heard her father threatened to buy up and close down the school if she wasn’t made Queen.”

Weiss cringed. That wasn’t true. Her father didn’t care one way or the other about this. He wouldn’t threaten or bribe the committee or the board into giving her the title, and she wouldn’t have asked him to.

But did the Prom committee know that, she wondered. Did they just give this crown to her to avoid her father’s expected wrath? The heiress felt a pit open in her stomach. After the dance was over, she thanked Neptune and slipped away. Seeing Ruby suddenly seemed far more desirable.
“Hey, Weiss!” a voice called, snapping the heiress out of her reverie.

Weiss looked around. Ruby was sitting in a tree. How she’d managed to climb up in her Prom dress was a mystery. The dress was red, like the hoodie the girl always wore, and helped set off her pale skin. That skin, almost as pale as Weiss’ own, glowed in the feeble light. The younger girl smiled broadly before hopping out of the tree. Even though she was on the lowest limb, she was still six or seven feet off the ground. Weiss was amazed she landed so lightly, like a cat. Speaking of cat-like, her silver eyes seemed to literally shine in the shadows, before she walked forward into the light.

For a moment, Weiss was caught off guard by how agile the girl was, and how cute she was, her innocent face framed by her russet-colored locks. “Ruby, you shouldn’t do that. What if you’d hurt yourself?”

Ruby shrugged. “Everyone gets hurt from time to time. We heal. Some of us faster than others.”

“And some injuries heal slower than others,” Weiss pointed out. “Besides, I don’t think your parents would approve of you ruining your dress.”

Ruby just shrugged, still smiling.

Weiss sighed. “Very well, why is it you wanted to meet with me, Miss Rose?”

Ruby laughed, snorting a little. It shouldn’t have been so cute. “You don’t need to be so formal, Weiss. I just wanted to talk. You’re always so guarded and confrontational in class, even with our friends. I just wanted to talk like a couple of normal girls for once.”

Weiss frowned. “Guarded” was a good way to describe how she normally acted. She’d like to blame the formality on her upbringing, but that was only part of the problem. The truth was, she’d chosen to be that way. Her father’s wealth and influence (part of which her sister currently wielded and the rest of which Weiss would one day herself inherit) meant she was constantly being courted by those who wanted to take advantage of it. She’d had to become cautious to be less vulnerable to manipulations and pain.

She smiled a little. “I’d like that, Ruby.”

Ruby smiled back, wider. “Hey, a slow dance is coming on,” she said, tilting her head. Weiss concentrated and thought she could vaguely make out a low beat coming from the gym. Ruby must have very sharp ears, she decided, or had stolen a copy of the DJ’s track record. The red-dressed redhead held out her hand. “May I have this dance?

Weiss rolled her eyes. “Dolt. You just asked me out here to dance, didn’t you?”

“So of course not! Dancing was just part of my amazing plan,” Ruby replied, shamelessly.

Weiss huffed. “Well, why not?”

Ruby placed her hands on Weiss’ hips; the heiress put hers on Ruby’s shoulders. Ruby was shorter than she was up-close. Except, the younger girl was wearing flats. If Weiss hadn’t been wearing heals, the heiress would be looking up at her.

They swayed to the music for what seemed an eternity. Weiss rested her head on Ruby’s shoulder. The exposed skin felt cool against her cheek. Weird, given what a balmy night it was, but that just made it more pleasant. This was perfect. Ruby wasn’t as good a dancer as Neptune, but Weiss had needed to teach Neptune in preparation for the dance back in Freshman year; without it, Mr. Suave
would’ve made a fool of himself. Ruby was different. She obviously had no experience dancing with a partner, but her movements were naturally graceful. And holding her felt so right. Weiss smiled, she’d always suspected she swung both ways.


The heiress frowned. Ruby’s breath felt cool. “Ruby . . . are you OK?” she asked, starting to raise her head.

She was stopped when Ruby’s left hand went to the back of her head. It was like pushing against a brick wall. “I’m sorry, Weiss,” she whispered.

Before Weiss could question what was going on, she felt a terrible pain in her neck. She screamed. The heiress felt something cool and wet wiggle against her skin, like a fish, and her strength left her. As her vision began to fade, she became aware of a voice calling out Ruby’s name.

“Ruby! Ruby! SIS!”


“Damn it, Ruby, stop the bleeding,” Yang yelled coming up. Ruby saw that her sister’s eyes were red, a sign she was beyond angry. Right now, Ruby didn’t care, though and did as the blond-haired girl instructed. Placing her mouth against Weiss’ neck again, she pressed her tongue against the wound, not to lick up the blood now, but to apply pressure and the soothing enzymes in her saliva.

Eventually, she drew back and examined the wound, crippling the unconscious girl in her arms. It was raw and ugly, but it was healed. “She’s safe,” Ruby said.

“Darn it, Rubes, how did this happen?” Yang asked. The older girl had crossed her arms and was still giving her sister the red-eye.

“She put her head on my shoulder. I didn’t think. It was just her pulse and her neck, and I was so hungry . . .”

“Damn it, Rubes, I told you to feed before coming tonight!” Yang yelled.

“Shhhhh! Do you want everyone to hear?” Ruby asked.

“I’m sorry, but this looks like a scene from a frickin’ horror movie,” Yang spat. The blond closed her eyes and counted to ten. “All right, we’re leaving. I’m going to call Uncle Qrow and get Blake. You think you can keep the Ice Queen and yourself safe without taking another chomp out of her?”

“Yes,” Ruby whispered. She wasn’t used to being yelled at by Yang like this, but she knew she deserved it. She’d royally screwed up.

Yang sighed, her eyes returning to their normal lavender. “Ruby, why didn’t you feed like I told you to?”

“I didn’t have time,” the girl said. “I needed to shower and change, and I’d fed pretty well yesterday, so I thought I could skip one night . . .”

Yang shook her head as her little sister rambled on. “Forget it. I’ll handle this, just make sure the
wound stays closed and none of the blood gets on her dress. It’s almost impossible to clean that stuff out.”

Weiss woke up in an unfamiliar bedroom. For most, this would trigger a panic attack, but the heiress didn’t have the energy for that. As a result, her mind remained clear enough to take stock of her surroundings. The bed was smaller than hers—though, as Weiss lived in what was practically a manor-house, that wasn’t saying much. It also contained a set of bunk beds. She was lying on the top bunk; it had red covers and pillows and a black comforter. Looking over the edge, she saw that the bed below her had one with yellow covers and pillows and a tan comforter. Casting her eyes about the room, she saw a pair of closets and a pair of elaborate desks with bookshelves. One was stuffed full of what looked like books, comics, and technical manuals. The other had a few books but was mostly filled with CDs and movies and sat below a collection of posters featuring various pop artists and bands, generally in revealing outfits and alluring poses. She noticed the windows were covered by thick, dark blue drapes that blocked out most of the light. However, she could see through the cracks that the sun was out.

At this point Weiss noticed herself. She wasn’t wearing her Prom dress. Instead, she’d been dressed in an oversized white T-shirt and baggy red pajama pants. She also noticed a thick bandage on her neck. Weiss swallowed, now conscious enough for the fear to start settling in. She was in an unknown location, with a person or persons unknown who had apparently undressed her and . . .

“You’re awake. Good.”

Weiss turned and saw a dark-haired, hazel-eyed girl with Asian-looking features standing in the doorway. Weiss hadn’t heard her come in. “Blake?” she asked. She knew the girl from school, one of a number of people who were friends with Pyrrha and Neptune. If memory served, the girl used to date Sun. At present, she was dressed in a black silk nighrobe. “What’s going on here?” she asked, starting to get up.

“How much of last night do you remember, Blake countered.

Weiss frowned. “I was at the dance. I met Ruby. She apologized . . .” Weiss’ hand flew to her neck. “Did Ruby do this to me? Why? How? What’s going on?” The heiress moved towards the ladder.

"RARRRR!"

Weiss was shocked as she heard an animal-like roar. Suddenly, she felt something slam into her, knocking back onto the bed, pinning her in place. When she could see straight again, she saw it was Blake holding her down. And that the girl had suddenly acquired fangs and glowing, slitted, amber-colored eyes.
Stepping into a New World

Chapter Notes

Fair warning: This is going to be a long one. Major exposition/lore dump.

“Thanks for the lift, Pyrrha,” Weiss said, climbing out of her friend’s car. She was again dressed in her Prom outfit, somewhat worse for the wear despite the Rose/Xiao Long family’s best attempts to the contrary. They just weren’t used to caring for a 4,000-dollar designer dress.

“No problem,” the tall, athletic girl replied. Weiss had called the girl from Ruby’s house phone to request a pick up. This had been Uncle Qrow’s insistence. He refused to let her call Winter for a pick up or to drive her home himself or let his brother-in-law do so. Privately, Weiss thought that the right decision. Given how mad Winter was likely to be, this was probably not the time to introduce her new friends/potential love interest to her sister. At least Winter already knew about and respected Pyrrha. Hopefully though, her friend would leave before she could get caught in the blast range. “I’m glad to see the two of you are finally getting along. Do you think you’ll hang out with her again?”

Weiss blushed. She’d gotten pretty good at reading between the lines when it came to Pyrrha, and she knew when her friend was being too polite to comment on something. In this case, Pyrrha obviously thought she’d slept with the other redhead the night before and was trying to figure out whether or not it was a one-time thing.

“We thought we’d go out sometime in the future. Maybe.” Weiss looked away, not sure if she wanted to see her friend’s smile or frown of disappointment.

Everyone thought of Pyrrha as some kind of badass Amazon woman due to her success in the basketball and volleyball teams, especially since it was common knowledge she had also earned a black belt in karate in her spare time. Given that she also had one of the highest GPAs in their class, everyone thought Pyrrha was too driven and/or too tough to care about romance. But her friends knew that the future Valedictorian was really a gushy romantic under it all. The girl had dragged Weiss and Neptune to every dumb teen romance movie that had come out in the past four years. Sometimes more than once.

That included the Twilight series, oddly enough. Weiss wondered what Ruby thought of those movies. The russet-haired girl certainly didn’t sparkle in the sunlight. Saving that thought for later, she told Pyrrha “You’d better leave before Winter realizes you’re here.”

“All right,” Pyrrha said. “I’ll see you later, Weiss.”

Where I’ll pester you for all the details. She didn’t say that last part, but Weiss knew her friend pretty well. As she saw Pyrrha drive off to safety, Weiss sighed and tried to smooth her dress a little. Might as well get this over with. She walked up to the front door and reached for the handle.

It opened before she could touch it.

“Where in world have you been?” Winter shouted. The normally cool and controlled woman was (by her own standards) a wreck. Bags under her eyes suggested she hadn’t slept last night, and a few
strands of hair were loose from her bun. For Weiss this was as shocking as if her sister had shaved her hair into a Mohawk. At least her white suit looked pressed and neat.

“Pyrrha invited me to her house last night. I slept over, and she drove me home this morning. She just left.” Weiss mumbled, looking down. At least Pyrrha had already made it clear she was perfectly willing to let Weiss throw her under the bus. The taller girl’s reputation was such that Winter would only take minimal offense. Hopefully.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Winter shouted. “Why didn’t you answer my calls?”

“I don’t know. I guess I missed it in the excitement.”

“I was calling you half the night.”

“My phone’s dead,” Weiss replied, repeating the story she had worked out with Ruby’s father and uncle before leaving. “I didn’t notice until I tried to call you on the drive over. Pyrrha didn’t have a car charger.” Weiss had to swallow the bile building in her throat. She hated lying to her sister. Winter had practically raised her, was her parent for all intents and purposes given how often their father was away (and how distant he was when he was home), but Qrow, Taiyang, and Yang had made it clear: she couldn’t let anyone know Ruby was... not normal, and that meant Weiss couldn’t say anything that would lead Winter to the family’s doorstep.

“Why didn’t you try to call me when you woke up?” Winter asked.

“I slept in. When I woke up I had to rush to get clean and dressed.” Weiss said.

Winter huffed but didn’t question her. Weiss slept in on weekends anyway, so it was perfectly believable that she might do so at a friend’s house. She checked her watch. “I have to go to work now. You are grounded for the next two weeks,” she said.

Weiss felt her stomach drop. She opened her mouth to argue, but shut it again. She knew she couldn’t argue with Winter. If Weiss had been guilty of what she said she was, the punishment would be totally justified. Besides, maybe accepting this would make her feel better about lying to Winter.

Winter turned and walked back into the house to take the side door into the garage. She paused as Weiss walked in. “Weiss,” she said. When her sister stopped, she continued. “I won’t tell Father. This time.”

“Really?” Weiss asked, eyes widening.

Winter nodded. “Yes. We both know he’ll just explode and force some unreasonable punishment on you and make both our lives miserable for months.”

Weiss ran up and hugged her sister. “Thank you,” she whispered. In spite of the negativity she’d shown earlier, Winter returned the hug.

“You’re welcome Weiss,” she said, a smile forcing itself onto her face. “Don’t forget your fencing and singing lessons. I’ll be back at five to pick you up for dinner.”

“We’re still going?” Weiss asked, shocked. She and Winter had planned on going out to a steakhouse in the neighboring city for a couple weeks, a place so high-class and popular one had to call that far ahead to get reservations. It was one last hurrah before Weiss had to knuckle-down and prepare for Finals.
Winter nodded. “Consider your grounding suspended for meals between the two of us.” She let go and walked through the door, shutting it behind her. Weiss turned to go up the stairs to her room, when Winter poked her head out again. “Weiss?”

“Yes?”

“You . . . you had a good time, right?”

“. . . I did.”

“Good. Now get changed.” Then she was gone.

Weiss wiped a tear from her eye as she headed upstairs. Sorry, Ruby, she thought, but you only have the second-best older sister in the world. She still had trouble believing the pair were sisters, though. Unlike herself and Winter, Ruby and Yang looked and acted nothing alike. That thought led her to realize how little she knew about Ruby and her family. And her nature.

Earlier that day

“Stay down, Weiss. We have a lot to talk about.” Blake’s voice was a snarl, a menacing sound Weiss would’ve expected from a lion or a panther. The heiress wanted to scream but was too terrified to. She was staring at Blake’s mouth; the girl’s canine teeth were extended into fangs and her incisors had become elongated and diagonal, the four teeth coming together to form a triangular point. The nails of the hands that held Weiss down had lengthened into pointed claws, and Blake’s eyes had become gold. Glowing gold, not like Ruby’s shiny silver orbs. While the redhead’s eyes might have been reflective, these shone with a hostile inner light and had slitted pupils, like a cat’s.

Then, before Weiss’ eyes, Blake’s teeth melted back to normal, flattening out into human dentition. The claws shrank back into nails, and the black-haired girl’s eyes dulled, losing their luster and returning to their normal shade of light hazel, their pupils again circular.


“I’m a Were, Weiss.”

“A Were? What? Do you mean a Werewolf?”

“I prefer the term ‘Werecat,’ actually,” was the smug reply. “But it’s all academic these days.”

“That’s . . . No . . . This is impossible,” Weiss stuttered.

“I’m afraid it’s quite possible, Weiss, and it’s a part of your life now.”

“What do you mean?”

“Where do you think you got that bandage on your neck? Ruby gave it to you. She’s a Vampire, Weiss.”


“Werecats,” Blake corrected.

“They’re not real!”

“I’ll admit, most of the mythology is . . . baloney,” Blake said. For a moment, the inherent silliness of
the statement caught Weiss off guard. “But Weiss, what’s your explanation for this?” Blake opened her mouth and Weiss shuddered as her teeth once again morphed into fangs and back again. At least this time, Blake had closed her eyes so Weiss didn’t have to see those change again. Those feline eyes were just so fundamentally predatory, even more so than the admittedly frightening teeth. “Like I said, most of the lore is dead wrong, so if it helps, consider us the real-life beings who inspired superstitious and ill-informed peasants to make up stories of monsters.”

Weiss could recognize a blatant rationalization when she heard one. But, it was something she could wrap her head around, so she latched onto it. “OK, Ruby is a Vampire, or something close to one. . . and she bit me? Why?”

“No on purpose,” Blake explained. “Her instincts got the better of her, but the deed was done and had to be dealt with. Yang, her sister, called their Uncle Qrow and grabbed me from the dance. We snuck you into his car and drove back to Ruby and Yang’s house. You’re in their room now.”

“OK. Wait, is this Ruby’s bed?” Weiss asked.

Blake smiled. “I wondered when you’d catch onto that. Yes, but she hasn’t slept all night. She went out hunting for deer with Qrow and is waiting for me to explain everything to you before she sees you again.”

“Why can’t she explain it to me herself?” Weiss asked, a little annoyed. She decided to ignore the part about hunting deer. Thanks to Pyrrha’s insistence one watching the Twilight Saga, she had a pretty good idea why Ruby was hunting them (and how), and that image was a little too much to think about.

“Tradition,” Blake explained. “It’s a rule among our . . . tribes that whoever exposes a normal person our existence must be the one to explain it to them. Technically, Ruby actually did that, but she’d just trip over her words trying to explain everything at once; she’d leave you more confused when you started. So someone else had to be on hand to do something . . . drastic.”

“Hence the pouncing?”

Blake smirked. “Well, it was also fun.”

Weiss frowned. “OK. So, monsters are real . . .”

Blake frowned. “You might want to avoid that term, Weiss. A lot of our peoples find it insulting. In fact, some even find names like ‘Vampire’ and ‘Were’ insulting. Remember, those are terms your ancestors used for the things they told scary stories about. Stories that justified their fear and hatred of our’s.”

“Really?” Weiss asked. “Then what do you call yourselves?”

Blake smiled. “Generally, we call ourselves ‘Creatures’ as a whole. Not much of a step-up, I’ll grant you, but it’s more or less what we’ve all agreed on. As for specific races,” Blake shrugged, “most actually do use humanity’s names for us, but that wasn’t always the case. In the old days, we had no names; we just use various titles based on our diet or other characteristics. For example, Ruby’s kind are traditionally called The Blood-drinker’s Clan, while mine are . . . well, let’s save that for later. Anyway, the majority of Vampires around here are perfectly fine with that name, just be careful around strangers.”

“There are more?” Weiss asked, deciding to ignore Blake’s obvious dodge for now. If Blake thought it was too much, the heiress wasn’t in the mood to argue. “More Vampires here in Vale?”
“Yes, but I doubt you’ll be meeting them anytime soon,” Blake said. “I’m going to let you up, now. Do you think you can handle this without freaking out?”

“...Yes.” Blake moved back and Weiss sat up again.

“Good. Now, let’s head down to breakfast.

Blake casually jumped down to the floor, landing appropriately cat-like, before straitening up and looking expectantly at Weiss. The heiress shook her head and climbed down the ladder. The pair walked down the stairs to the kitchen. On the way, Weiss got the chance to examine the house she found herself in. There was another room down the hall from the one she’d woken up in, with a bathroom whose door was half-open beyond that. Headed down the stairs and on the walls leading to the kitchen, she saw numerous pictures on the wall. Some featured younger versions of either Ruby or a blond-haired girl she recognized as Yang—they’re actually sisters? she thought—or both together. There were also pictures of a male version of Yang she knew must be the girls’ father, along with two women. One was a black-haired, red-eyed version of Yang. The other was simply an older, calmer looking image of Ruby. She paused. Which one was the mother?

“Weiss?”

The heiress turned. Standing in the corner of the kitchen, wearing a black and red skirt, complete with black stockings, red-laced black boots, and an honest-to-goodness red cloak with hood, was Ruby. The silver-eyed girl shuffled her feet a little. Her eyes avoided Weiss’.

“Good morning, Ruby,” Weiss said, not knowing what else to do. She noticed Blake had slipped away from them.

“Did you sleep well?” the girl asked.

Weiss struggled for a reply. “Yes, your bed was adequately comfortable.”

“Yeah, I know. It’s good. Say, are the pajamas comfy? They’re mine. Cuz, we’re about the same size, you know. Closer than Yang or Dad or Uncle Qrow.”

“Yes, they are quite nice—wait, Ruby were you the one who changed my clothes?”

“Oh, Yang helped.” Ruby tried to smile to lighten the situation.

It didn’t help. “You undressed me?” Weiss screeched. It was embarrassing enough to think of Ruby seeing her in her underwear, but Weiss’ dress had been held up by spaghetti-thin straps. She’d forgone wearing a bra.

“I’m sorry. I just thought you’d be really uncomfortable. And you’d ruin your dress, and then you’d be upset about it...”

“I’m more upset that you saw me practically naked!”

“You still had your underwear on!” Ruby cried trying to defend herself.

“I didn’t have a bra!”

The pair stood in silence for a moment. Red-faced, eyes glued to their feet, silence, before the voice of Yang rang out. “Holy crap, Weiss! You just found out my baby sis is a freaking Vampire, and she sucked your blood last night, and all you care about is that we saw your A-cups? Get some perspective girl—Ouch! C’mon, Blake, you know it’s the truth!”
Weiss felt her face go from heated to hot, verging on an explosion. Her clenched fists shook, her nails digging into her flesh.

“Heh, heh. Leave it to Yang to get to the point,” Ruby said. “So, yeah, I’m a . . .”

“Blood-drinker?” Weiss asked.

“Heh, always preferred Vampire myself, but yeah.” Looking up, Ruby’s face fell. “Weiss, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to bite you. It’s just I hadn’t eaten well before the dance, and I was so happy to be dancing with you, and you were so close, and . . .”

“Enough, Ruby,” Weiss said. Ruby clammed up, looking down again. Weiss sighed. “Look, Ruby, I’m not mad, not anymore. This is all just so much to take in.”

“Sorry,” Ruby said again.

Weiss fidgeted a little. “I liked dancing with you as well, Ruby.”

“Really?” Ruby’s face lit up cartoonishly bright. Which was so wrong on a Vampire.

“Yes,” Weiss said. “It was . . .very nice.”

“Want to . . . go out sometime?” Ruby asked.

“I think I would,” Weiss said. “But not today. Winter is already going to kill me for disappearing last night, and I need to get home as soon as possible.”

“In that case, why not put it off a little longer?” Ruby asked.

“Because if I don’t show up before Winter leaves for work, I’m fairly certain she’ll call the National Guard.”

Ruby laughed. “All right, got time for Breakfast? It’s only 7:30.”

Weiss raised an eyebrow at that. Usually she slept in if it wasn’t a school day. “I think so.” She walked forward to the kitchen. Ruby said she needed to stay back because she hadn’t slept in about 30 hours or more.

As was walking out, Ruby stopped and added. “You know, I thought your breasts were really nice, Weiss.”

“What? You . . . DOLT!”

Weiss hadn’t gotten to question the odd little family about the issue much at breakfast. No, that wasn’t true. She’d actively avoided discussing the subject. Tried to pretend it didn’t exist. Thinking back, she shouldn’t have done that. It was foolish, dangerous even, and it could cause her to insult or injure Ruby or her loved ones by accident. She needed more information.

Weiss took out a notebook and opened it to one of the few remaining blank pages. Before she pestered anyone else, she figured she should start with what she knew about Vampires. That wasn’t much, though, and almost everything she knew contradicted itself.

The heiress frowned and divided the page into three columns. One was filled with the clichés: turning into bats, hypnotism, sleeping in coffins, stakes to the heart, crosses, garlic, burning in sunlight, capes, fangs, Transylvanian nobility, and you became one by being bitten by a pre-existing
Vampire. In the second, she transcribed all she remembered about the Buffyverse Vampires: enhanced athleticism, senses, and healing; morphing faces and fangs; more stakes, sunlight, and crosses; plus holy water, fire, decapitation, needing an invitation to enter a human house, and in spite of being immortal, soullessness. Unlike the previous type, conversion required a pre-existing Vampire feeding their blood to a human. Biting was just a way to get to the blood. Weiss then transcribed all she could recall of the Twilight vampires in the last column. They were superhumanly strong and fast, more so than their Buffyverse counterparts, with diamond-hard skin that sparkled in the sunlight; on that note, these Vampires didn’t suffer from any of the previous groups’ weaknesses. They had promsuperhuman senses and the slightest scent of blood could set them off. They didn’t have fangs, but did have color-changing eyes, didn’t sleep, and were superhumanly beautiful. Weiss thought for a moment, before writing “prone to extreme romantics” in the last row.

Ruby didn’t seem to fit neatly into any of the above categories. She walked around in sunlight, but didn’t sparkle, didn’t have the complete amorality that came with being soulless in Buffy, and didn’t have an Eastern European accent. The heiress was also fairly certain the girl couldn’t turn into a bat.
Weiss sighed and dug out her phone, turning it on. Pyrrha had suggested she turn it off to support the dead battery story, even though it helped paint her in a bad light. Weiss would have to buy the girl something really nice as a present. Maybe a box set of movies?

Weiss scrolled through her list of contacts. It had almost doubled since yesterday. Before Weiss left,
Ruby had dashed down the hall—still staying in the shadows, though—and told everyone to give Weiss their number so she could call if she needed them. She now had all four of the family’s numbers, plus their house phone and Blake’s cell phone. It was actually heartwarming to see how much they cared, if a little depressing that six new numbers was such a big deal. Weiss considered calling Ruby, but realized the girl would probably be sleeping by now. Did she sleep during the day? She went to school, but Weiss almost never saw her outside of it, and she was always falling asleep in Port’s classes . . .

Regardless, Weiss didn’t feel comfortable asking directly from Ruby or any of her family. It was just too awkward. Besides, it would more or less defeat the purpose of researching to avoid insulting her. Instead, Weiss hit Blake’s phone number. Hopefully, she wasn’t already asleep.

Blake answered on the third ring. “Weiss? What is it?”

Weiss sat down at her desk. “I was wondering . . . That is, I hope you would be willing . . . what I mean is . . . Could you tell me more about Ruby?”

“You mean her favorite flavor of ice cream?” Blake asked. Weiss could hear her smirk.

“No. I mean about . . . Vampires.”

“Why so curious all of a sudden?” The question sounded vaguely hostile.

“I just realized I knew almost nothing about Ruby’s nature, aside from the fact that she accidently bit me on the neck and apparently goes hunting with her uncle at night. I was just . . . I don’t want to do or say the wrong thing and hurt or insult her by accident.”

Blake’s voice changed. “Good answer. What do you know about Vampires?”

“Not much. I wasn’t much of a fan before. I know some girls are really into that, but not me.”

“Not before Ruby, anyway,” Blake said. Weiss wondered if the Werecat could hear her heartbeat rising through the phone.

“Right, well, all I know is the popular things from cartoons and whatnot, and what I’ve seen watching Buffy the Vampire Slayer with Winter.”

“Your sister watches Buffy?” Blake asked, curious.

“It’s her guilty pleasure,” Weiss admitted. “Also, she says we need to support positive portrayals of women with power whenever we can.” When Blake didn’t comment, she continued. “Anyway, I didn’t watch every episode, but I saw enough to know the Vampires there were different from the ones I was used to. Oh, and I saw the Twilight movies with Pyrrha.”

Blake chuckled across the phone. “Now that’s what I call a guilty pleasure. We all make fun of Pyrrha for liking that series, given how wrong it is.”

“What— you mean, Pyrrha knows about you? Is she a, a Vampire or a Were too?”

“No, but . . . Weiss I didn’t want to tell you this until later, but . . . everyone in our group except you, until now, either is or knows about Creatures.”

“Oh,” Weiss said. She took a deep breath. “OK, then. Could we just focus on the Vampires today and come back to that later?”
“Sure,” Blake said, and Weiss mentally thanked her. “Well, it sounds like you’ve heard the most common portrayals of Vampires in modern media, which unfortunately means everything you know contradicts itself.”

Weiss looked up from her list. “Yes. Almost the only things they all have in common is drinking blood and living forever.”

“As I said earlier, most Vampire lore is trash. A cross won’t repel them. Sunlight won’t kill them, and neither will a stake to the heart. But the bloodlust—that part’s true. They need fresh blood, preferably human blood, to survive, and that instinct is strong. That leads us to Rule Number One: don’t ever place your heart or any place where you could feel your pulse near Ruby’s ears or face. This includes your neck, chest, and wrist. If she hears your pulse, her hunting instinct will take over, at least until she develops more control.” Blake paused for a moment, then continued, sounding amused. “The insides of your thighs are also off-limits. Sorry.”

“So that’s what happened with Ruby,” Weiss said, ignoring Blake’s insinuations. “I guess when I rested my head; my neck was too close.”

“Exactly. So, from now on, watch how you touch Ruby, at least until she’s older. Oh, and watch out for her nails—they don’t grow like mine do, but they’re sharper than your’s. A lot sharper.”

“I understand. Actually, Blake was Ruby born a Vampire? That doesn’t really show up in what I’ve seen.”

“It is uncommon,” Blake admitted. “Most are Vampires Turned. That is, they were born human and were changed later, but there are a handful like Ruby who were born into Vampirism.”

“And how does that work?” Weiss asked. “In Buffy, you had to drink Vampire blood, but in other versions, just being bitten was enough—Oh my gosh, Blake! Am I going to become . . .”

“No! No, Weiss. Buffy was right on that one, mostly. Just being bitten won’t do anything but give you a scar. Or make you bleed to death. You have to drink their blood to Turn, and you have to drink a lot or it’s no good.”

“All right,” Weiss said, fingering her neck. Her hair had kept the mark concealed from Winter. She’d have to use makeup to hide it in the future. At least until she came up with a good story for it.

“All right, are you ready to continue, Weiss?” Blake asked.

“Yes.”

“Good. Now, my with earlier comments you might be thinking that Twilight was right, and Ruby really is unstoppable. That’s far from true. Sunlight doesn’t physically burn them, but it hurts—like a nasty sunburn without the actual burn. Some really do sleep in the day, especially the traditionalists, but most just wear sunglasses and a hat or carry a parasol to avoid sunlight. You might have noticed Ruby wears her jacket’s hood a lot around school and stayed in the shadows this morning. Qrow’s told me they actually do sometimes use coffins, but that’s more of a convenience for hiding or travel than a necessity.”

“All right,” Weiss said. “What else? I don’t think Ruby can turn into a bat, and Qrow complained that they can’t mesmerize people.” He said if he could, they’d have just made her forget the whole thing.

Blake nodded. “Some can, mesmerize that is, but it seems more like a learned skill than an innate power. Like a hypnotist. The shapeshifting . . . that’s something different. Mostly, the idea that
Vampires could turn into bats, rats, and wolves (yes, there are legends about that, it’s in Dracula, the book not the movie) are based off the fact that these animals like them.”

“Really?” Weiss asked, turning up her nose in distaste. Rats . . .

Blake nodded. “We don’t know why, but they tend to flock to a Vampire’s home and will even curl up around them while sleeping if they can. I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but Yang complains about the family’s rat problem. A lot.” Weiss frowned. She did recall hearing the blond complain about the family’s pest problem once or twice. She probably wouldn’t be over to Ruby’s house again anytime soon. “Domestic animals, like cats and dogs, however, hate them—all Creatures, really.”

“Why?” Weiss asked. Now that she thought about it, she remembered seeing dogs go ballistic when she was walking around town with Pyrrha, Neptune, and Sun.

“They have a strong sense of smell, and they’re acclimated to being around humans,” Blake explained. “They can tell we’re not quite right, that we’re not really human.

Weiss frowned at that statement but couldn’t think of anything to say. She tried a different question. “What about the enhanced strength, healing and senses?” she asked, looking at her notes.

“That’s all true, although it’s nowhere near as outlandish as Twilight,” Blake said. “Vampires are stronger than humans; most Creatures are really. Ruby could easily win an arm-wrestling match against any high school quarterback if she wanted to—and probably some college-age ones too. She’s also agile enough to climb brick walls as easily as if she was crawling across the ground and has the stamina to run a marathon without becoming winded. Her kind have some of the best healing abilities of all Creatures: pretty much anything that doesn’t involve amputation can be undone. And because she’s biologically designed to be a nocturnal predator, her senses are heightened as well. Did you see Ruby’s eyes flash last night?” Blake asked.

Weiss nodded, though she knew Blake couldn’t see her. “Yes, I ignored it then. I thought it was a trick of the light.”

“It’s something most mammals do, but humans can’t,” Blake said. “It’s called an eye-shine. It helps them see in the dark. A Vampire’s senses are also sharp enough to actually taste the chemicals in your blood and know if you’re on drugs, medication, or how healthy your diet is, and they can literally hear your blood flowing in your veins,” she said. Weiss imagined the frown the dark-haired Were was giving her.

“Which is another reason to avoid neck exposure,” the heiress completed.

“Right. But, their best sense is smell. Once a Vampire has your scent, they remember it for life.” Blake paused. “That’s actually where the myths about garlic come in. While garlic cloves do sometimes repel them because of the stench (though that’s nothing to rely on if you get in trouble), the real value is in the flowers. If you them around yourself or your residence or burn them and dust your clothes with the ashes, they can hide you from a Vampire’s sense of smell.”

“Really?” Weiss asked. It sounded a little fantastic.

“Yes, it’s one of the few things Dracula got even partially right. The book, not the movie that is. The first movie used wolfsbane instead of garlic.” She chuckled. “Wolfsbane is how you hide from my kind.”

“OK. So they can eat garlic?” Weiss asked.

“Most can, although some are allergic to it. Not Ruby, though.”
Weiss looked over her notes. “Well, I think I’ve seen Ruby’s reflection before, and I know I saw Qrow’s reflection in the window, so that’s out.”

Blake chuckled. “I’ve heard Stoker made that part up himself, actually.”

“All right,” Weiss said, marking it down. “Ruby eats lunch with us—does she really eat it?”

“Yes, but it’s like eating candy—little to no nutritional value.” Blake paused. “That does remind me of something important, though.”

“What?”

Blake sounded uncomfortable. “I don’t know if this will ever come up, but you should probably know it anyway. Don’t ever offer her a bottle of blood or anything, OK?”

Weiss scrunched her face. “Ew, why would I do that?”

“I don’t know, just don’t, all right? Vampires need fresh blood. Like what they’d use in transfusions. If it isn’t fresh, they can . . . get food poisoning, basically.”

Weiss shrugged. “All right. Wait, then how do they . . . ?”

“Feed?” Blake completed. “There’s a farmer out past the edge of town. He knows about Creatures and helps provides for our needs. He lets the Vampires have some of his herd from time to time.”

“Cows?” Weiss asked. She didn’t remember there being a dairy farm anywhere near Vale.

“Pigs,” Blake corrected. “And I know Qrow and Ruby hunt pretty regularly, too. Animals, that is. It isn’t as healthy or tasty as human blood, but it gets the job done.” Blake paused. “I know there are some of their kind that have . . . symbiotic relationships with humans.”

“You mean people let them drink their blood?”

“In exchange for security, money, whatever,” Blake said. “It’s not something Ruby and Qrow have much fondness for, but if it keeps them from attacking and killing people, why complain?”

“Good point,” Weiss said. “Let’s see. Ruby’s eyes don’t change color, but . . . do other Vampires have silver eyes?”

“Ruby’s mother did, but I don’t know about any others. Qrow doesn’t, but his are red. Most Vampires have more human-looking eyes, aside from the eye-shine. That said, a good rule of thumb is that if someone has unusual eyes, they’re not human.”

“I always thought your eyes were too yellow,” Weiss said. “Wait, Yang’s eyes are purple, and sometimes I swear they’re red.”

“That’s complicated.” Blake said. “The red comes from her mother, Qrow’s sister; she was a Vampire too. The purple is the same as their father. Aside from that, though, Taiyang’s human. I know Yang’s mother, Raven, and Ruby’s mother, Summer, both wanted to turn him, but couldn’t. The only explanation is that he must have something preternatural in his background, although usually when you have one Creature parent, you’re one yourself. Whatever it is, we think Yang inherited part of it, and it’s why she isn’t a Vampire like Ruby.”

“Then Yang and Ruby are half-sisters?” Weiss asked. That would explain the differences.

“Yes, but you’ll have to ask them about it if you want the details. Later. Much later,” Blake said in a
tone that told Weiss not to argue. “Vampires mate for life, and are usually monogamous, but there are exceptions. Their parents were one of them.”

“Right.” Weiss said. That was definitely a topic she wasn’t ready to deal with. She examined the mark on her neck. “What about fangs? It doesn’t look like Ruby just left two holes like a snakebite. Is it like Buffy with multiple fangs, or like Twilight, where they just bite with super-strong human-shaped teeth?”

“Ask Ruby to show you when you see her again,” was the reply. “You won’t believe it otherwise. Trust me.”

“All right. Um, Blake, is Ruby immortal?”

“Why do you want to know?” Before she could answer, Blake continued. “When a human is Turned, they stop aging. Ruby was born a Blood Drinker, so she’ll age like a normal person until she achieves sexual maturity. Then she’ll stop. And, yes, Vampires don’t die—unless or until their heads are removed. Buffy was wrong about stakes—ironically, Vampires are some of the few species that won’t die from jamming a piece of wood into their hearts—and about fire making them disintegrate but they were right about decapitation being fatal. A newborn Vampire has the chance to live for untold millennia—maybe even as long as the mythical Methos—or maybe all they get is another week.”

“Methos?” Weiss asked.

She could hear Blake’s smiled again. Enigmatic and unsettling. “We have our legends too, Weiss.”

“Right. I think that’s everything. Thank you, Blake!”

“Anytime. If you want to know anything else just call.”

“Of course. Have a pleasant—”

“Wait!” Blake cut her off, “There was one more thing. Do not tell anyone about Ruby and her family! They could be taken away or killed in the streets.”

“Oh!” Weiss said, half-indignantly and half-angry at the suggestion that she would be so careless with Ruby or her family.

“Most people would expect them to harm others. Do you understand me?”

“Yes! Yes!”

“All right, well goodbye, Wei—”

“Wait! Give me the phone!” Weiss heard Yang’s voice through the phone and heard some kind of rumple-sounding noise along with a brief argument between Yang and Blake. “Weiss, you still there?”

“Yes,” Weiss said, wondering what the blond girl had to say.

“Blake, she just mentioned Vampires mate for life, right?”

Weiss frowned at the blonde’s choice of name, but answered. “Yes.”

“And that they’re immortal, right?”
“Right. Yang—what does this mean?”

“It means, Princess” Yang growled, “that when my little sis was asking you out, it was a big deal. Vampires don’t do that for just anybody. It means she’s considering you for the long haul. The very long haul.”

Weiss blushed. “What? But, Yang we haven’t even had one date yet!”

“I didn’t say it was a done deal. I just mean . . . Vampires tend to be cautious, really cautious about this sort of thing, all right? Ruby’s never dated anyone before; she wouldn’t have asked you out unless she thought there was something there. Understand? She feels something for you.”

“I think I do,” Weiss said, feeling a lump in her stomach. “. . . Is there anything else?

“Uh . . .no that’s it. Just . . . take care of my little sis, all right?” It sounded like Yang had something else she wanted to say, but had changed her mind. Probably just the normal threats to her sister’s potential date.

“I will. I promise.”

“I thought for a moment you were going to tell her.” Blake said, setting her phone back on the night side table, carefully. Ruby was still snoring above them, but she wasn’t nearly as deep a sleeper as her sister. They’d been lucky not to wake her. Blake and Yang were in their nightwear in the lower bunk. The last night had been so hectic no one had been able to sleep. They were making up for it now.

Yang sighed, rolling over and embracing her girlfriend, possibly her mate. “I was going to but . . .” Yang lowered her voice. “How do I tell my sister’s heartthrob her older sister is probably a freaking scav?”

Blake swallowed. Yes, that was bad, but it was only the tip of the iceberg. “Yang, I spoke to Qrow earlier. He thinks it’s worse than that.” Blake took a deep breath. “Yang, he thinks she’s a Specialist.”

Yang’s eyes bugged out. “Fuck.”

Chapter End Notes

Most of this was stolen from SUPERNATURAL, but the part about animals (Bats, Rats, Cats, and Dogs) is stolen from THE SAGA OF DARREN SHAN. Oh, and Garlic isn’t used in SUPERNATURAL to hide from Vampires, that bit was kind of a cross between SUPERNATURAL’S scent-blocking mixture, and GRIMM’s use of Wolfsbane to hide from the Werewolf-like Blutbaden.
Weiss paused, panting. She was dressed in fencing pads, holding a saber in her hand—a saber which had just made contact with the heart insignia on her opponent. The match took place in a moderately-sized room, where numerous adolescent and older individuals came together to master blade work.

Coach Ironwood hobbled over to the pair with as much dignity as he could. “Well done, both of you. If you both hold your commitment to participating in this summer’s tournament, I’m certain we’ll have a new trophy for the cabinet.”

“Thank you, sir,” Weiss answered. James Ironwood was a man whom she admired greatly. He was a former military officer who had lost his right arm and leg in combat. He never specified where or
when, though many assumed it was the Persian Gulf or Desert Storm. Since then, Ironwood had
made his living teaching a variety of martial arts in his gym. In addition to fencing, the Atlas Gym
also ran courses in various weapons—including Kendo, Eskrima, and Bo-Staff, plus kickboxing,
grappling, and self-defense courses. He was also good friends with Winter, though she’d never told
Weiss how they’d met.

Beside Weiss, Ciel removed her helmet, tucking it under her arm. “Thank you, sir,” the dark-skinned
girl repeated, only without the enthusiasm. Nothing disrespectful, it was just her way. Ciel was
known as a model of efficiency. Almost like some kind of robot, really. She was already smoothing
any wrinkles in her uniform and straightening her hair.

Weiss turned to her. “Good match,” she said, offering her hand.

“Good match,” Ciel said. Once again, the response was mechanical, as was the handshake. Weiss
had given trying to elicit reactions out of the girl.

“Ladies, you’re dismissed. Don’t forget, I won’t be here next week because of prior commitments.
I’ll be back next Monday, though. See you then,” the coach announced, before heading to his office.
Despite the missing leg, his walk was dignified and strong. Ciel immediately spun and walked
towards the girls’ locker room. Weiss started to follow her.

“Good job, Weiss!” Neptune shouted. As Weiss left the ring, the blue-haired boy came up,
accompanied by his boyfriend. Unlike Weiss and Neptune, Sun was not garbed in fencing gear; he
wasn’t a member and was only there to see Neptune in action.

“You sure showed that creepy little . . . creep,” Sun added.

“That’s not a terribly polite thing to say,” Weiss said. In all honesty, though, the girl creeped Weiss
out, too. The heiress had just been raised too well to remark on it.

“Eh, when have I ever been accused of being too polite?” the blond replied. “Want to grab some
lunch?”

“I can’t. Winter has me grounded for two weeks.”

“Should’ve snuck back home before dawn, Ice Queen,” Sun said. “That’s what I always did.”

“I don’t think Weiss was in any condition to do much sneaking, Sun,” Neptune said, casually
scanning the room.

“What are you—wait do you know . . . ?”

“About you and Ruby?” Neptune smiled. “Pyrrha couldn’t stop talking about your ‘Prom-night
romance’ with everyone’s favorite prodigy. Blake also texted the whole club that you were a
member now.”

“The whole club? You mean . . .”

“That we know that you know about Ruby’s . . . batty-ness,” Sun said, cheesily.

Neptune shook his head. “Forgive him; he’s spent too much time with Yang.”

Weiss shook her head. “Sorry. I’m still a little new to all this. So, are either of you . . . ?”
“Special?” Sun asked. He heaved an elaborate sigh. “Nope. I’m afraid I am just a boring, normal Homo Sapien. Neptune on the other hand is a merman.”

“I prefer the term Nix,” Neptune deadpanned.

“The Greek primordial entity of night?” Weiss asked, low looking at Neptune askance.

“More like the German river fairy,” Neptune said. “Naiad, if you want to use Greek terms.”

Weiss frowned. “But you’re terrified of water. I saw you at the beach on skip day.” It was true; the boy had made it apparently made it his goal to stay as far up the sand as he could.

Neptune frowned. “That was because we were at the ocean.” The boy shuddered. “My tribe belongs in fresh-water. Like I said, river fairy.”

Weiss cocked her head. “You’re named after the Roman god of the seas, and you’re specifically afraid of the ocean?”

“All my cousins were named after river spirits,” Neptune grumbled. “Blame my folks and their over-developed sense of cultural pride.”

“I think it’s kind of cute,” Sun said, wrapping his arm around Neptune.

Weiss rubbed her head. “So you’re a Nix, Ruby is a Vampire, Blake is a Were—”

“Better than being a What,” Sun quipped, eliciting a groan from his boyfriend. Weiss decided to ignore it.

“And Yang is something that has color-changing eyes and apparently can’t Turn into a Vampire,” Weiss finished. “Can I ask what anyone else is?”

“Uh, tricky question,” Neptune remarked. He adopted a “thoughtful” pose, scratching his chin. “That might be a little too personal.”

“Ren eats liver,” Sun chimed in.

Weiss stared at him in shock. Neptune sighed. “On the other hand, why not?”

“He . . . I’m sorry . . . He eats liver? As in human liver?”

“Or animal,” Sun said, unrepentant.

Neptune immediately went on damage control. “Ren’s what’s called a Gumiho, or Kitsune in Japan, but Gumiho is more accurate. It’s similar to Weres like Blake, only without the moon thing, and they eat liver instead of heart.” Neptune blinked as he looked at Weiss’ face. “And, I’m guessing she didn’t tell you that part, did she?”

Weiss’ mouth was doing its best impression of a fish, as she tried and failed to form words. Eventually, she was able to force out a single question. “What . . . else does . . . anyone eat?”

Sun grinned. “That’s kind of a big deal for the Creatures, the ones with weird diets, anyway.” Weiss looked at him askance. “Not all Creatures are that way. Neptune doesn’t; he’s just a guy with a few extra tricks.”

“I prefer to think of myself more like the Missing Link,” Neptune said with a smile. “Actually, some folks think Creatures like me are more along the lines of convergent evolution: I’m human-ish, but I
didn’t evolve from the great apes. There isn’t much way to tell, though. It’s not the sort of thing you can run tests on in a lab.”

Seeing that Weiss had checked out again, Sun laughed. “Yeah, that’s how it always goes. Anyway, most Creatures are divided by what they feed on and where they’re from: Blake and her cardio-chomping ancestors basically popped up everywhere, Ruby’s kindred started out in Eurasia, and liver-eaters like Ren hail from the Far East. There’s other lineages too, though: fat-suckers from Peru, corpse-eaters from the Middle East (you’d call them Ghouls), marrow-suckers from Africa, and brain-munching zombies from the Caribbean, plus brain-fluid drainers from the British Isles and spinal-fluid drainers from mainland Europe. Rumor has it Scandanavia had this weird group that could suck out your body-heat, and Eastern Europe has these Hags who can steal your bio-electric current, but that sounds a little far-fetched to me. And let’s not forget everyone’s favorites: Incubi and Succubi who actually feed on your . . . whoopie,” he said, grin-widening as Weiss blushed, getting the idea. “Then, of course there’s the guys who just like raw, fresh meat; they popped up everywhere, like the Were did. Still with us?”

Weiss swallowed, trying to grasp it all. Turning to Neptune she asked. “Is that everyone?”

He shrugged. “More or less. He forgot the ones from Japan that eat liquefied—you know what, let’s not bother—and we’re still ignoring all the ones like me who don’t have any weird dietary requirements; we’ve just got a little extra skills that you don’t have. Satisfied?”

“No, but that’s my own fault,” Weiss sighed. Then, she frowned. “Actually, now that I think about it, where is Ren? I haven’t seen him with you group for a few days.”

The two boys shared a look. “That’s cuz he’s been missing,” Sun whispered, no longer so bright.

“Missing?” Weiss asked.

“We don’t know why,” Neptune said. “But there’s the possibility . . . Weiss did you read the newspaper today?”

Weiss blinked. “No. What does that have to do with anything?”

Sun took out his phone and punched some touch-screen buttons. Then he handed it to Weiss. It was a news article.

VAMPIRE HUNTERS KILL LOCAL COUPLE!
Local couple, Jean and Gary Sable, were found dead in their beds this morning by police after concerned neighbors noticed the pair hadn’t left their house in two days. Officers were shocked to discover the couple lay in their beds with large, wooden rods sticking out of their chests. Upon further inspection, they discovered the couple’s heads had been severed and their mouths stuffed with garlic.

The article went on, describing how the officers imagined the killers entered the house, and other such mundane details. Weiss barely glanced at it. She looked up in shock at Sun and Neptune. “This is . . . I mean . . .”

“Yeah, it’s pretty gruesome,” Neptune said.

“The real kicker is that they probably weren’t even Vampires,” Sun said. “Fricking scavs.”

“Scavs?” Weiss asked.

the KKK, but with a hate on for supernatural creatures. Mostly Bloodsuckers, but they have some silver bullets for Blake’s people too.”

“Oh,” Weiss said. “Is that . . . I mean do you really need a silver bullet to . . .?”

“Nah,” Sun said. Growled, really. “These guys are like every other racist in the world: ignorant and misinformed. I hope it breaks their banks.”

Neptune took over. “They’re also like witch hunters: they go after anyone who sticks out, anyone who might fit their prejudiced, folklore-clouded perceptions of what a ‘monster’ is.” He pointed to the screen. “Maybe these people worked the late shift and didn’t get out much during the day. Maybe they liked their steaks rare. Maybe the scavs just smoked the wrong weed and thought they saw fangs. It doesn’t matter. The end result is these guys found themselves on the scavs’ radar, and now they’re dead.”

Weiss swallowed. Her blood ran painfully cold. “So, you think Ren was . . . killed by these . . . monsters?”

Sun smiled. “Nice name, but no. Those idiots would need some of that Felix whatsit stuff from Harry Potter to kill a real Creature. No. That was just to prove a point. Weiss, there are people who hunt and kill people like Neptune and Ruby.”

The heiress’ breath hitched at the russet-haired girl’s name. For one horrible instant, she had a vision of Ruby lying in her bed, wooden stake impaling her chest. Garlic peeking out of her sweet lips on a dismembered head . . .

She shook her head. Neptune saw it all, but chose to ignore it. “Weiss, not everyone who knows the truth about us is friendly like our club. There are people—like you—who know the truth about us. We call that ‘Enlightened,’ and sadly some hunters are Enlightened, even if they’re still prejudiced against us. The difference between them and scavs is that they know they don’t need to waste their money on silver weapons or lug around wooden stakes and mallets. Not for most of us, anyway. They know what works and what doesn’t.” He paused for a moment, looking Weiss in the eye. “And they really don’t like the humans like you, Sun, Mr. Xaio Long or anyone one of our friends who hang out with creatures like me.”

Weiss shuddered. Sun patted her shoulder. “Don’t worry, Ice Queen. The Specialists—these ‘Enlightened’ hunters—mostly hang out in big, important cities, like Chicago, New York, L.A, or even Detroit. Heck, the last time anyone had ever even heard of them in Florida was in Miami, and that was back in the 80’s.”

“Thanks,” Weiss said, not feeling totally reassured. “I have to leave now; I’m probably breaking my probation, and I need to eat before my singing lessons or I’ll be too distracted to sing.” Weiss paused for a moment. “I hope you find Ren soon. He seemed nice and was always very polite.”

Neptune nodded. “Yeah, he was a gentleman.”

“Nora’s been going insane,” Sun muttered. “Jaune and Yang have been pretty upset too.”

“Why them?” Weiss asked.

Sun smiled sadly. “Jaune has seven little sisters; Ren’s like the older brother he’s wanted since he was five. As for Yang . . . they dated a while back.”

“Nine months,” Neptune said. “Before Blake, that was a record for her.”
Ironwood sat in his office, phone pressed to his ear. “I’m telling you, we need her,” he said. “She’s the best student I’ve had since you graduated, Winter. Weiss would make an excellent Slayer—”

“No,” the voice on the other end of the line said. “We’re not having this conversation again, James. Weiss stays out of this. Period.”

“You told me you wanted her to be ready,” Ironwood reminded her, a touch of annoyance in his voice.

“Ready to defend herself,” Winter said. “James, I’ve spent half my life running into the darkness, jumping and shooting at shadows, and I’ve done it for her, to keep Weiss safe. I asked you to train Weiss in case I wasn’t enough, not so that she could see that nightmares are real.”

“Winter—”

“You once told me we’re fighting to make sure the fantasy the rest of the world believes in becomes real, James. Weiss is my world, and I won’t let you throw her into danger. End of discussion.”

The coach sighed. “Very well. I’ll have to contend with Ciel. At least she was raised into this. Anyway, I received word that there’s been a . . . development. Pack your bags, Winter; we have some exterminating to do.”

“. . . When?”

“We leave tonight. 7 p.m. at the latest.”

“. . . I promised Weiss we’d have dinner together,” Winter muttered.

“I’m sorry, Winter, but it looks like those morons in S.C.A.V. finally caught a real lead, and we need to clean out the infestation before the amateurs spook the leeches off.”

“Very well, I’ll leave as soon as I can. The usual rendezvous spot?”

“Yes. See you there.”

The pair hung up without further pleasantries. Ironwood leaned back in his chair. It was annoying, really; he’d have liked to have the younger sister on his team. She was already displaying more promise than Winter had at her age, and Winter the best Slayer he’d ever seen. Still, he wouldn’t argue with her. In addition to having no desire to ruin the effective relationship he had with the elder Schnee, Weiss lacked the kind of harsh experience and the resulting coldness or rage that filled their organization’s recruits. It was for that same reason that he hadn’t tried to recruit the Nikos girl from Weiss’ school, despite the redhead’s reputation as a scholar and athlete. She was just too positive and had too many friends amongst the ignorant, innocent masses.

Still, as he said, he could make do with Ciel. The girl had been raised for the job since she was orphaned by unknown assailants years ago, and she was almost as tough as the Schnees. In time, monsters would fall by the dozen before her.

Ironwood picked up his phone again and dialed a number. “Ciel, it’s Ironwood. Come see me. Now.”

Chapter End Notes
And now, I reveal how much of a nerd I am:

S.C.A.V. is not my idea. I stole it from the 1991 made-for-TV move "Blood Ties." It wasn't my favorite, but what I really liked was the idea of the Southern Coalition Against Vampires. I'd seen "monster hunters as metaphor for racism" works before, but this was the first time someone actually went so far as to create an anti-Vampire version of the KKK. Maybe it's because I'm from Florida myself, but that resonated with me.

The Term "Specialists" is less a reference to the show than it is to DC's Helix imprint's excellent "Black Lamb" comics (It was about a costumed Vampire who hunted monster hunters in a dystopic futuristic setting). Why did Ironwood use the term "Slayer?" Because "Specialist" is a Creature-specific term, and they're not exactly talking to the guys trying to kill them.

Where all the Creature Types come from:
Nyx - YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL MY LADY (AND YOUR BLOOD IS DELICIOUS)
Vampires - SUPERNATURAL
Heart-Eating-Werewolves - SUPERNATURAL
Gumiho (Liver-Eating-Things) - SUPERNATURAL/Traditional Korean Folklore
Pishhtaco (Peruvian Fat-Sucker) - SUPERNATURAL
Ghoul (Middle Eastern Corpse-Eaters) - SUPERNATURAL
Scavengers (African Marrow-Suckers) - Grimm (inspired by the Barbatus Ossifrage)
Zombies - iZombie
Wraiths (Brain-Fluid Drainers) - SUPERNATURAL
Changelings (Spinal-Fluid Drainers) - SUPERNATURAL (They actually claim the monsters drain the fluid found in people's joints, but the sucker clearly went for the spine).
Heat Vampires (Scandanavian Heat Suckers) - GRIMM (inspired by Varme Tyv)
Hags - SUPERNATURAL (inspired by Shtriga)
Incubi/Succubi - LOST GIRL (sort of, I wanted an excuse for a sexually active race that didn't involve something as esoteric as "Chi-sucking"/slash I kind of already used that with Shtriga).
Wendigo/Rugarus (Flesh Eaters) - HAVEN/SUPERNATURAL
Jorogumo (Japanese Liquefied-Organ Suckers) - GRIMM (inspired by Spinnetodd)/SUPERNATURAL (Arachne)
“What do you mean dinner’s cancelled?” Weiss asked, shocked.

Pausing in the act of packing her suitcase, her sister sighed. “I’m sorry, Weiss, but there’s an emergency with one of our facilities in Mantle, and I have to deal with it.” Unlike the stereotypical rich girl, Winter was a model packer; she’d only brought a single suitcase out and was filling it with necessities, just enough to get her through three days or so of work. “I promise I’ll be back Tuesday night. Wednesday at most. Monday if I can swing it.”

“You promised we’d have dinner together, tonight,” Weiss muttered.

“Well, I’m sorry, Weiss, but the world doesn’t stop for the sake of our eating arrangements.”

“I know, it’s just I barely get to see you! You’re always so busy these days!”

“I have responsibilities—”


Winter stopped packing and hung her head. “I miss you, too Weiss,” she said, softly. “Just remember, everything I do, I do for us.” Turning to look her sister in the eye, Winter smiled. “You know, I’ve been thinking, it’s wrong to keep you cooped up alone in this house for three days or more. Why don’t you call up one of your friends and ask to sleep over?”

Weiss’ eyes lit up. “Really? But what about my punishment?”

Winter’s smile shrank into a slight grimace. “I may have over-reacted. You’ve never done anything like that before, and it obviously wasn’t pre-planned. And in spite of all that, you went along with being grounded without complaint. So, I’m going to drop the matter. Consider yourself paroled for good behavior.”

“Thank you!” Weiss cried, looking up at her sister in adoration.

Winter’s smile returned—sometimes, she caught glimpses of the child Weiss hadn’t really gotten to be—before turning stern. “I do expect you to study while you’re gone, and keep your phone on. I’ll be texting you every night, and it would be in your best interests to answer. Understand?”

Weiss nodded. “Yes, of course. Thank you, Winter.”

“You’re welcome. Now start calling your friends and packing your bags. Remember to pack enough clothes for three days and an extra outfit in case of an emergency. In fact, pack something semiformal in case you all want to go out to dinner. Plus, toiletries and pajamas, and your study materials.”
Weiss nodded. “Yes, of course. I’ll go do that!”

Winter allowed herself a quiet laugh as Weiss scurried off to her room. She couldn’t remember the last time she’d seen her younger sister so cheerful. However, Weiss would only be distracted for so long. Winter dug beneath the piles of shirts in her dresser and pulled out two pairs of black and gray camo-shirts and -pants. She tucked these beneath her other clothes, along with two pairs of thick, black socks and black ski masks taken from her sock drawers. Bending down, she removed a second suitcase from under her bed. Checking it, she was pleased to see its inner mechanisms all looked secure. Then, she went into her closet. Drawing back several dresses, Winter revealed a hidden alcove, filled with guns, swords, and other weapons and equipment. Winter selected three handguns of varying caliber, along with the necessary boxes of bullets and cleaning kits. These she secured within the specially-designed suitcase, fitted with grooves and straps to keep the items from moving around too much. She also added a pair of night-vision goggles, a heavily customized first-aid kit, combat boots, and a sword-care kit. Finally, she removed a pair of sabers and secured them inside a suit bag—behind her white-and-black formal suit; like her other luggage, it had been modified to conceal her weaponry.

Pausing for a moment, Winter snagged a second combat knife to compliment the concealed one she was currently wearing. Then, she moved her clothes back into place, hiding the alcove from the world and more importantly, her baby sister.

“Thanks, Pyrrha,” Weiss said, holding her phone to her ear as she packed her clothes. “I don’t think I’ll ever repay you.”

“No problem, Weiss,” the redhead replied. “So, I take it you’re planning to take advantage of your no-longer-grounded status to spend some time with Ruby.”

Weiss blushed. “Shhhh. Not so loud!” she said, looking over her shoulder. Thankfully, the door was shut, and Winter’s room was down the hall from her own.

“What? You two are . . . ‘together,’ aren’t you?” Pyrrha asked.

Weiss blushed. “I don’t know,” she said, running her free hand through her hair. “I’ve never heard her say anything disparaging, but every time I try to bring it up, she changes the subject. I think it’s a case of her being tolerant in theory but less than thrilled at the idea that said theory might apply to me.”

Still, she heard Pyrrha smile on the other end of the line. “At least you can admit it to yourself. Believe me, that’s a big first step.”

“Thank you, Pyrrha,” Weiss said, before pausing. For one moment, Weiss considered questioning why Pyrrha sounded like she was speaking from personal experience. But, the moment passed. “Anyway, Winter said she wants to leave by 6:30. Do you think you could be here by then?”

“No problem,” Pyrrha replied. “I have to say, though, Weiss, it’s hard to believe someone from a family as rich as yours doesn’t have her own car.”
“Well there isn’t much point in owning a car if I don’t have a license,” Weiss snarked.

“You don’t—Weiss, who turns 18 without getting her driver’s license?”

“Blame Winter,” Weiss said. “Sometimes she takes her guardianship duties to the extreme.”

Pyrrha laughed. “Well, I guess Yang and Ruby have lost all right to complain about over-protective parents. I’ll see you tonight, Weiss.”

“See you, Pyrrha.”

It was only after they hung up that Weiss remembered something. Blake had said Pyrrha was neither a Vampire nor a Were, but she’d never said whether or not their classmate was human.

Weiss wondered briefly what percent of her graduating class actually was the same species as her.

—

“Here’s Pyrrha,” Weiss said, as the redhead’s graphite-colored SUV pulled into the driveway.

“Right on time,” Winter said approvingly as she loaded the last of her bags into her corvette. White, of course.

“Hello, Weiss,” Pyrrha said, getting out of her car. “Need help with your bags?” she asked as she opened up the trunk.

“No, I’ve got them,” Weiss said, sliding her bag in. Despite this, Pyrrha hefted her backpack up and into the vehicle.

“Thank you for volunteering to take care of Weiss for a few days, Pyrrha,” Winter said.

“It’s no problem,” Pyrrha replied. “Although I kind of wish I’d known about this last night,” she said, winking at Weiss. The platinum blond shuffled as she remembered she was still lying to her sister about the last night.

“Yes, well. Please remember that Weiss needs to study for her exams, though I’m sure I don’t need to remind someone with your academic record of that,” Winter said, pointedly.

“Don’t worry,” Pyrrha said, seemingly unsurprised Winter knew about her grades. “I promise Weiss will be ready for her tests.”

“We were actually planning to study together tonight,” Weiss jumped in. Beside her, Pyrrha nodded, and Weiss resisted the urge to sigh in relief. Good, she wasn’t technically lying to her sister.

Winter nodded. “Very good.” Turning back to Weiss, she addressed her sister. “Take care of yourself, Weiss, and remember to text me every night if I don’t text or call you first, and keep your phone on and with you at all times, and study for your tests, and be sure to get enough sleep, and eat balanced meals, and—”

“I will, Winter, I promise,” Weiss said.

Winter stopped. Her eyes darted to Pyrrha for a moment before returning to Weiss. The younger Schnee thought she saw her sister’s cheeks darken ever so slightly. “Very well. I’ll see you in a few days, Weiss.” Then, she bent down and gave her younger sister a quick hug before sliding into the driver’s seat and driving off.

Weiss watched her driver off before turning back to Pyrrha. She shuffled slightly. “Right, I suppose
we should get going.”

Pyrrha nodded. “It looks like the two of you share a strong bond,” she said, as the pair entered the SUV.

“Yes,” Weiss said as she buckled up. “It makes up for not having any parents.”

Pyrrha didn’t comment on this, merely turning the key and driving the car out of the driveway onto the road. The pair drove in silence for about ten minutes, before Weiss realized they were in a part of town she didn’t recognize. “I don’t think I’ve ever actually been to your house before.”

The athletic girl grinned. “No, you haven’t, which makes the story we told your sister more than a little ironic.”

Weiss blushed. “Thank you for that again, Pyrrha.”

“Don’t mention it; I’d do the same for Ruby or Blake or Neptune, or any of our friends.”

Weiss smiled a little at the thought. Getting attacked by Ruby and discovering she was a Vampire might have been a terrifying experience, but it had given her many new friends. And possibly a girlfriend. Blushing at the thought, she decided to distract herself. “I know, but . . . I really don’t like lying to Winter.”

Pyrrha frowned as she pulled up and stopped at a red light. “Weiss,” she said, turning to her friend. “You realize you can’t tell her anything.”

“I know, Neptune and Sun told me about . . . S.C.A.V., and the Specialists.”

“They called the rest of us,” Pyrrha said. “Those two really should learn the value of silence. However you found out, I hope you understand just how dangerous this is, Weiss.”

“I know, it’s just—”

“You didn’t come out to Winter while I was driving over, did you?” the other girl asked.

“What? No!” Weiss asked, feeling slightly insulted. “Why would I do that?”

Pyrrha sighed. The light changed, and she pushed down the accelerator. “Weiss, you aren’t ready to share your sexuality with your sister, the sister who practically raised you as a parent and obviously loves you a great deal. If you don’t think she’s ready to deal with your dating a girl, what makes you think she’ll be thrilled about your dating a Vampire?”

Weiss bit her lip. She understood where Pyrrha was coming from. “But, if this becomes a long-term thing . . . that is, if Ruby and I, if our relationship works out well . . .” Weiss was blushing heavily now at the thought. “Don’t you think I’ll have to explain why Ruby’s stopped aging at some point?”

Pyrrha smiled widely at that. “I hope you will, Weiss,” she said. “But first, I think you’ll have to explain why you’re shopping for a ring for another woman.”

Weiss’s blush took over her whole face. “Shut—shut up, Pyrrha! We’re . . . That is, we don’t . . .”

The heiress’ frantic stuttering descended into unintelligible babbling. Pyrrha, to her credit, managed not to laugh.

“Speaking of the others,” Pyrrha said, once Weiss had finally fallen silent. “I hope you don’t mind that I invited them over to join us.” The redhead now kept her eyes fixed on the road straight ahead.
“I did say it was a study party.”

“Well, yes you did,” the white-haired girl said.

Pyrrha grinned guiltily. “It’s kind of our group’s Exam-time tradition.”

Weiss frowned. “How come I was never invited?”

“You didn’t know about us then,” Pyrrha said, carefully. “It’s true we mostly eat pizza and stuff, but some of us have other hungers to feed.”

“Ruby drinks blood,” Weiss said, “And Blake . . . is going to eat a heart?”

“They’ll probably have killed a deer or something before they came over,” Pyrrha said, carefully, “but I can’t promise you. And, some of our needs aren’t as easily met ahead of time.”

“Oh . . .” Weiss considered that for a moment. “Uh, what exactly are the others, Pyrrha?” She cringed. “That came out badly, didn’t it?”

“A little,” Pyrrha said. “But, it’s good that you realized that, and since Neptune and Sun apparently failed to tell you, Weiss you should also know that in our culture, it’s a pretty personal question to ask someone what they are. Especially for you, since you’re a human.”

“It is?”

“Yes. Some claim it’s dehumanizing, seeing a person only as their species instead of who they are.” Pyrrha flipped her blinker and turned left, entering a residential area. “But truthfully, it’s more about survival. Knowing what we are means knowing how to fight us. Our strengths. Our weaknesses.”

“I see,” Weiss said. She did, looking back on it. When Blake had explained Ruby’s nature to her, she’d listed the limits of the Vampire girl’s abilities as well as her vulnerabilities: Garlic, expired blood, sunlight, decapitation. Not that Weiss would ever want to hurt the cheerful, silver-eyed girl, but now she knew how and she could see where that might make some uncomfortable.

“We’re here,” Pyrrha said, pulling in. Weiss’ friend lived in a modest, single-story home, painted green with white doors and roof. It had a small lawn, with grass, bushes of pink roses, and a statue of Cupid in the middle.

“You have a lovely home, Pyrrha,” Weiss said, getting out.

“Thank you,” the taller girl replied, opening the trunk and helping Weiss with her bags.

“I thought you said everyone else would be here,” Weiss commented. “Where are their cars? All I see is Neptune’s.” The ocean-fearing river spirit’s blue Chevy was parked on the side of the curb.

“Most of our club don’t have their own cars. They just ask for rides from those of us who do,” Pyrrha explained. “Nora’s parked next to Neptune. She and Ren share the Jeep. With him gone . . .”

“I’m sorry,” Weiss said.

“It’s not your fault,” Pyrrha said, opening the door.

“Weiss!”

The White-haired girl jumped as a red blur exploded out of the house and collided with her. She would’ve been knocked off her feet if a pair of surprisingly strong arms hadn’t wrapped themselves
around her torso. The heiress struggled for a moment, before she saw the smiling face covered by the hood.

“Ruby? Let me go!”

The younger girl blushed, but did as she was told. “Sorry,” she said. “I was just so excited to see you. I mean, I’m sorry your sister had to up and leave you like this, but I was looking forward to seeing you again and expecting I’d have to wait another week or something and—

“Ruby.” The rambling girl stopped at Weiss’ interjection. Grinning, she dropped her head like a dog that had been scolded. Weiss sighed; this girl was irresistible. “It’s all right. I’m happy to see you too.”

The blood-sucking girl’s head shot up again, smiling once more. She took the older girl’s hand in her own, apparently ignoring what it did to Weiss’ pulse, and casually picked her suitcase up in the other—a suitcase Weiss would’ve needed both hands to lift. Blake was right; Ruby was stronger than she appeared. The older girl also noticed that Ruby’s hand felt unnaturally cool, given how warm it was outside. Weiss recalled the girl’s skin was cold when they danced too. She also recalled the Vampires in Twilight had cold skin. Apparently, the movies did get a few things right.

“Come on, Weiss; everyone’s eager to meet you,” she said, leading the older girl inside.

“But they’ve already met me,” Weiss protested.

“Yeah, but then you didn’t know about Creatures,” Ruby said, smiling. “So, we had to be really cautious around you. Now you know, so we can start over again!”

Weiss shook her head, but allowed Ruby to lead her in. It was actually kind of sweet, in a duncy, Ruby sort of way. Weiss smiled at the thought, as the younger girl led her into Pyrrha’s house. Through the front door was the kitchen which merged into a moderately-sized living room area. The floor was made of large squares of white tile, but some squares were red, yellow, and green. There was a sliding glass door to one side of the room, which had curtains drawn over it. Weiss wondered about that before she recalled the girl whose cool hand held her own and realized why it was so.

In the middle of the room was a large, round table, next to a counter-top. Both of these had been dominated by textbooks, notes, and laptops, owned by the other six people whose club Ruby, Pyrrha, and now Weiss were all a part of.

“Heya, Ice Queen!” Yang grinned, waving. Next to her, Blake (now wearing a black bow on top of her head), rolled her eyes and nodded in greeting. Across from them, Neptune and Sun sat. Weiss was surprised to see that Sun’s shirt was now open, revealed his muscled chest; clearly, the boy was even less interested in social graces at his friend’s home than he was in public buildings. Between the two pairs, facing Weiss was a morose-looking red-headed girl. Unlike Ruby or Pyrrha, this girl’s hair was more orange in color. Nora, as Weiss recalled, but Nora was usually even more hyper than Ruby. What could have made her—?

“Ruff! Ruff!”

For the second time that day, Weiss felt a living creature slam into her like a racecar. This time she was only knocked back a few steps, though. Swiveling her head in confusion, Weiss saw nothing until she looked down at the point of impact: her shins. Looking up at her was a black and white corgi with a big doggy grin, panting at her. The diminutive dog barked again.

“And that’s Zwei,” Ruby explained. Bending down, she scooped the dog into her arms. If anything
dog and girl began to grin even wider. “He’s our family’s pet. Dad lets me and Yang bring him over to these study sessions. Isn’t he the best dog in the whole world?”

“Ruby,” Weiss said, frowning “why would your father let you bring a filthy, mangy mutt to a study session even if he’s the cutest little thing in the whole world? Oh yes, he is, yes he is!” Half way through her rant, Weiss’ frown had become a smile as dopey as Ruby’s, and she’d switched to using the gushy voice adults like to use when they talk to babies.

“I’d have thought the Ice Queen was a cat person,” Yang mused.

“I think I might have cured her of that this morning.” Blake remarked as she admired the two girls fawning over the tiny dog like a newborn. For a brief moment, she allowed herself to hope for the future.

“Hey, Weiss,” Pyrrha said. “We’re ordering pizza for dinner. What do you like? We’re already getting a vegetarian, a meat-lovers’, and a bacon, pineapple, and jalapenos.” At the look Weiss gave her, Pyrrha smiled and explained, “It’s Yang and Ruby’s favorite.”

“What? It’s cheesy and salty and sweet and spicy!” Ruby interjected.

“Don’t forget the cheese,” Jaune said.

“Oh, I’m sorry, Nora. We’re also getting a plain cheese for Nora.”

“You’re ordering her a whole pizza?” Weiss asked. Then again, she had seen girl make whole stacks of pancakes disappear in the school cafeteria . . . Was she some kind of Creature? One with a super-charged metabolism? Weiss couldn’t think of anything off-hand that fit that bill, but then again, she was never a horror/fantasy enthusiast in the strictest sense, and thus far her education into the nature of genuine supernatural beings had been minimal, possibly by design. When the taller girl didn’t answer, she decided to let the matter go. For now. “I’ll just share with you and Nora, if you’re both all right with it.”

Pyrrha eyed Nora. The orange-haired girl flicked her eyes over to her before replying “Sure,” in a dead-pan voice. Weiss shuddered; this was not like Nora she was accustomed to. Granted, she didn’t know that Nora particularly well, but this was definitely not healthy behavior. Did this have something to do with Ren’s disappearance? Neptune said she’d been taking it hard.

“Ruff! Ruff!” Zwei barked. The small canine jumped out of Ruby’s arms and landed, surprisingly cat-like, on the floor. Once again acting like a furry bullet, Zwei raced around the table and jumped into Nora’s lap, barking once more. The girl smiled slightly and began petting the dog who stayed still and silent, only moving to lick his friend occasionally.

Seeing him so affectionate made Weiss remember something Blake had said earlier. “I thought dogs didn’t like Creatures.”

“Most don’t,” Ruby replied. “But Zwei isn’t any dog; he’s a Black Dog.”

“His fur is obviously black and white,” Weiss deadpanned.

“It’s a type of dog, not a description,” Sun said, laughing.

“Yeah, like the Grim from Harry Potter,” Yang said.

“Specifically, Black Dogs have been specially bred and raised to act as companion animals to Creatures,” Blake explained.
“They’re kind of like witches’ familiars,” Jaune said. “The others mentioned there are versions of them in cats and other animals, too.”

“I’ve been asking about Black Monkeys,” Sun said. “I almost found a breeder for one, but it ended badly.”

“It’s true, unfortunately,” Neptune remarked. The others nodded sagely, except Yang who . . . shuddered? As if in fear? Weiss wasn’t sure she wanted to know what the blond girl had seen to provoke such a reaction. She wasn’t aware Yang was capable of fear.

“Anyway, pull up a chair, Snow Angel,” Jaune said, gesturing to the open spaces at the counter.

“Maybe I should sit somewhere else . . .” Weiss said. She wasn’t sure whether or not Jaune had actually given up with his crush one her.

“There’s an open place next to me,” Ruby said. Weiss turned to face her . . . potential girlfriend, who was grinning and blushing. “I’m next to Jaune; you could sit at the end of the counter.”

“All right,” Weiss said. She set her things down next to Ruby. The younger girl smiled, still blushing.

Blake spoke “What was the Lend-Lease policy of World War II?”

“What?” Weiss asked.

“The Lend-Lease policy, formally titled ‘An Act to Promote the Defense of the United States,’ was a program which ran from March 11, 1941 and ended in September 1945,” Neptune answered. “The United States supplied the Allies with ships and planes in exchange for leases on army and naval bases in Allied territory during the war.”

“We also lent stuff that couldn’t be returned, such as food, oil, and munitions,” Sun added.

“Right and right,” Blake said.

“It was all the Allies, right?” Jaune asked, looking up from his notes. “Or was it just Britain?”

“It was more or less all the Allies, Jaune,” Pyrrha answered. “Although Britain is the one everyone knows about.”

“Can someone please tell me what you’re talking about?” Weiss asked.

“It’s a study party, Weiss,” Ruby explained. “This is the ‘study’ part. We discuss definitions and events with each other.”

Weiss sniffed. “That is so inefficient,” she said.

“No. It works,” Ruby insisted. “Come on, Weiss, why don’t you try the next one?”

Weiss rolled her eyes. “Fine,” she said. “Ask me something.”

And so it went: for the next few hours or so, the friends took turns quizzing each other. They paused for a moment when the pizza arrived with breadsticks and soda. Pyrrha warmed up some broccoli to go with it. The group continued to eat while studying. To Weiss’ surprise, Nora really did eat an entire cheese pizza herself, minus the one slice Weiss took when the box was opened. Weiss also tried a slice of Ruby and Yang’s concoction after being pestered by the younger redhead. Not bad.
There was one thing, though. Rather than drinking soda as anyone who knew her might expect, Ruby was drinking from a red metal sports bottle, the kind hikers and bikers used. Weiss tried to ignore it, but the open bottle gave off a coppery scent that reminded her that the girl she was sitting next to was not human.

Afterwards, the group piled onto the couch with a couple of bowls of popcorn to watch a movie. Weiss snorted at the title. “Twilight?” she asked. “Really?”

“Hey, you’re one of us now, Snow Angel,” Neptune said, grinning. “Now you can laugh along with us at all the dumb vampire stuff!”

“Consider it your initiation, Weiss,” Ruby said. She sat down next to Weiss, still blushing and smiling.

“Pyrrha likes it,” Jaune said, sitting beside the tallest redhead. “It’s her house, so her choice of movie, right?”

Pyrrha smiled and kissed his cheek. “Thank you, Jaune,” she said. She whispered something else into his ear, which made the blond boy blush. It also made Ruby blush even more and fidget in her seat.

Yang snorted. “Hey, my innocent, Vampire sister’s in the room, you two. Watch it!”

Pyrrha and Jaune straightened up. Pyrrha stuttered something about people minding their own business. Weiss blinked once, before blushing much like Ruby and dropped her eyes to her lap. It was pretty obvious what the couple—and it was also obvious they were a couple, strange as it might seem—had been talking about. They were both 18; so, they were both legal, consenting adults, but still . . . She hadn’t realized they were that involved.

The movie started, and Weiss soon saw that the group was right. It turned out to be amazingly funny to watch a movie about Vampires that was amazingly inaccurate. Now the sparkly skin seemed even more ridiculous. Yang and Ruby also kept calling the movie out on how over-powered the Cullen family and their enemies were.

“Come on!” the blond yelled. “If they’re that stupid strong how come these guys aren’t ruling the world? If I was an indestructible, super-fast, unbeatable monster you think I’d be hiding it?” Que more blushing from the flesh-and-blood Vampire as she realized what she was saying.

“Sounds like a good idea, Ruby,” Sun said, smiling. “So when are you planning to ‘come out?’”

“Very bad,” Blake said, smiling. “What should we do about them, Neptune?”

“I don’t know, Blake. Maybe banish them to the couch?” He was smiling, too. Not in a friendly way.
“Wait, are you threatening to cut us off?” Sun cried, looking at his boyfriend with betrayal.

“You wouldn’t!” Yang cried.

“They would,” Pyrrha said, trying—and failing—not to laugh. “You know they would.”

Immediately, the two blondes began apologizing to Ruby, who took great pleasure in pretending to be traumatized at their words. Weiss meanwhile was fighting another blush; apparently Pyrrha and Jaune weren’t the only couple “getting busy,” as the term went.

Eventually, the movie wound down to the Prom scene. This, Weiss was informed, was the one part they couldn’t mock because Pyrrha loved it so much. The white-haired girl already knew her friend cried every time she saw it. Honestly, Weiss’ own feelings about the scene were a little more mixed than they had been when she’d watched through it before. Watching Bella and Edward slow dance in the gazebo while discussing their relationship brought to mind thoughts of herself and Ruby on Prom. Then there was that moment when Edward dipped Bella and brought his mouth so close to her neck. A little more uncomfortable now that an actual Vampire had chomped into her. A little weirder now that that Vampire was sitting next to her and squeezing her hand during that scene.

“What? Oops, sorry Weiss,” Ruby said. The girl let go instantly. Weiss flexed her fingers. Thankfully, she’d realized what was happening before Ruby could use her super-strength to do any real damage, but she wondered when the younger girl had taken her hand at all.

“All right,” Pyrrha said as the credits rolled. “Time to wash up. Grab your toiletries, Weiss; I’ll show you where the showers are.”

“Oh, all right,” Weiss said. As she followed Pyrrha down the hall, a thought occurred to her. When was everyone leaving? Why were they all washing together? And, where were Pyrrha’s parents?

“The bedrooms are this way,” Pyrrha said, stopping in front of a hallway behind the kitchen. “Mine’s on the right; my parents’ is on the left.” She pointed each one out. “We also have a guest room on the other side of the living room if you need to use the toilet during the night, but it doesn’t have a shower.”

“Thank you, Pyrrha,” Weiss said. “But, I have to ask, where are your parents? I was always under the assumption you had a close relationship with them.” Weiss tried to keep the bitterness out of her voice as she spoke. She’d long ago realized her family was neither the norm nor the ideal, and it was useless being jealous of others whose father’s didn’t share her own’s shortcomings.

“Oh, ah,” Pyrrha shifted a little. For a moment, she made Weiss think of a taller, older Ruby.
Somehow, the thought was not unappealing. “I forgot to mention. These parties—they’re sleepovers; we all spend the weekend at my place, while my parents go . . . out.”

Weiss almost fainted. “You mean your parents just . . . clear out so you and your friends can spend time together?” There was no way her father would do such a thing. Not that he was home enough for it to matter, anyway.

“They trust us enough not to burn the house down or anything,” Pyrrha said. A faint blush creeped into her cheeks, “and they have . . . other ways to occupy their time. Friends who will let them . . . sleep over.” The taller girl shook her head as if to say it didn’t matter. “Anyway, you have to remember that our community is a tightly-knit one, Weiss. I’ve known Neptune, Blake, Ren (and thus Nora), along with Yang and Ruby practically since I was born. Our parents all see this as a good thing.”

That took Weiss a moment to process. Her father, in what little time he could stand to be around her, had tried to impress upon her how much “above” others she was. How superior. And Winter, while encouraging he to make friends, was always careful to remind her that she had responsibilities and resources they didn't, and that she would be watched and judged by everyone around her.

It seemed Vale’s paranormal community lived differently than its financial one. Neptune had mentioned something to that effect when she’d spoken with the river Creature earlier, but it was one thing to be aware that a member of their demographic had gone missing; it was another thing to hear and see how much this secret society seemed to heavily encourage camaraderie and closeness between its members.

“Well, then. Would it be too much to ask to use the shower in your room? It feels a little weird to use one belonging to people I’ve never met before.”

“No trouble, Weiss,” Pyrrha said. “Let me just grab my towel and stuff.” She led Weiss into her room. The white-haired girl was unsurprised to see a collection of academic awards and sports’ trophies crowding the walls and shelves. Like Yang, Pyrrha had chosen to paper her walls with posters, but instead of bands, Pyrrha used movie posters in her decorating: Titanic, Romeo and Juliet, Some Kind of Wonderful, Beauty and the Beast, and of course Twilight. “I guess I am kind of obsessive,” the athletic girl admitted, emerging from the bathroom with her supplies. “Just let me grab some pajamas, and I’ll be—”

“Uh, bad timing?” Weiss spun around and saw Jaune standing in the doorway, nightclothes in hand. The blond boy was shuffling a little, clearly wishing he was a Creature that could melt into the floor.

“Sorry, Jaune,” Pyrrha said. “Weiss is using mine. We—ah, you’ll just have to use the one in my parents’ room. After me of course.” She gently but forcefully pushed the flustered boy out of the room. Stopping to close the door, she turned back to Weiss. “We’ve got a pretty good water heater, so don’t worry about taking too long. Well, except that some people will want to use the shower after you, so don’t take too long. Bye.”

With that, she shut her bedroom door, a little too hard, leaving Weiss standing in the middle of her room, trying to figure out what had just happened. Why had Jaune come in? If he was familiar with the house, didn’t he know there were only two showers and both she and Pyrrha were using them? For that matter, shouldn’t he know where Pyrrha’s parents’ room was? So why had he instead gone to his girlfriend’s room—oh.

Maybe the real question was how many times would her friends make her blush before the night was out?
Weiss returned to the living room, dressed in a light blue nightgown, her hair for once free of its usual ponytail. The group continued to banter lightly about whatever. Blake and Ruby had pulled out books they were reading in between comments. At various points, pairs or individuals would slip off to the showers themselves. Soon, Weiss wasn’t the only one dressed in for bed. Well, “dressed” might be too strong a term; while Neptune was wearing a T-shirt and gym shorts (the first time she’d seen him wear such garments outside well, gym), Sun was bare-chested, dressed in nothing more than a pair of boxers and his usual coin necklace. Perhaps it was because she was too shocked, but Weiss actually managed to avoid blushing.

Yang, Ruby, and Nora were dressed more conservatively: in a combination of T-shirts, pajama pants and boy shorts. Nora’s pink shirt with “Boop” written on it seemed out of place on the girl who was still sitting morosely on the couch holding Zwei. Blake however had taken a page from Sun’s book and gone for a more “exotic” look, dressing in a black silk kimono-like garment. Except, Weiss knew enough about Japan to know kimonos were supposed to go below the wearer’s thighs.

Eventually, Pyrrha and Jaune returned. Pyrrha wore a simple nightgown much like Weiss’ own (though the heiress’ was undoubtedly ridiculously more expensive). Like Nora’s shirt it was bright pink. Jaune, by contrast, wore sky-blue flannel pajamas, the sight of which made Yang and Ruby snort. Obviously, there was some private joke she wasn’t privy to. The blond boy was also shambling; he seemed barely able to walk.

Pyrrha was carrying a bundled-up sleeping bag in her hands. “Here, Weiss. Sorry I forgot to grab it earlier,” she said, trying her best to avoid looking the younger girl in the eye.

“Thank you,” Weiss said, cautiously. She wasn’t exactly sure what the protocol was for speaking to a friend after said friend returned from a prolonged bought of intercourse. Jaune groaned and collapsed onto an open sleeping bag on the floor. Glancing over at him, the boy looked like he was already asleep. Still, all things considered, he had probably proven that Cardin Winchester had no reason to make fun of him ever again.

The sleeping bags were arranged in a circle in the middle of the room, all facing towards the middle, with the exception of Nora. Pyrrha gently pushed the girl down on the couch, drawing a blanket up around her. The pair exchanged a mumbled good-night, before Nora closed her eyes and hugged Zwei closer to her. The corgi snuggled up, apparently content to act as the grieving girl’s Teddy Bear.

Weiss saw Ruby pat a spot next to the sleeping bag she was sitting on. Weiss frowned a little. She liked Ruby, acknowledged the girl might make a good romantic partner, but this all seemed to be moving a little too fast for her. Swallowing her pride, Weiss opened her bag between the one Pyrrha had claimed for herself and the couch Nora lay on. It was a little tricky positioning her bag as there was a table next to the couch, but she made it work. The noise roused Zwei. Lifting his head, the corgi let out a couple of quite yips. Weiss smiled and patted the Black Dog’s head.

Weiss was trying to avoid looking back at Ruby, lest she see the hurt look she expected was on the girl’s face. As a result, she missed how Ruby had let out an inaudible growl at her actions. The young Vampire had tried to get up, but Blake (who’d heard the growl) and Yang (who hadn’t but was sitting right next to her sister) had pulled her back down. Ruby had glared at them both before coming to her senses. Blinking, she looked around. Pyrrha, Sun, and Neptune were all trying to avoid looking at her.

“Well talk later,” Yang whispered into her ear. Ruby nodded quickly, then scrambled into her sleeping bag.

Blake shook her head at the younger girl’s antics, then rose from the spot she’d crouched between
her and Jaune walked over her and Yang to her spot on the blonde’s other side. Next to her was Neptune, followed by Sun. There was an unspoken rule that Sun and Blake should not sleep next to each other.

Pyrrha switched the lights off. “Good night, everyone,” she said, before slipping into her own bag between Weiss and Jaune.

It was an unusual situation for Weiss. For a while, she shifted, in the sleeping bag. Her family had never gone on camping trips or the like, so she’d never slept in such a thing before. More distractingly, though, were the sounds. She heard other people shifting in their bags. Soon, the sounds of soft breathing were heard from some of her friends—only to be drowned out by the loud snoring of others. How was a person supposed to sleep in a crowded room? But she was so tired, and the sounds of breathing were so rhythmic that in her fatigued mind, they transformed into a lullaby, like the sounds of the road on a long journey. Eventually, she drifted off to sleep on waves of nocturnal sounds.

It was then that Blake got up. Her inhuman hearing telling her the Heiress was deep in Morpheus’ embrace. The Were shifted into her eyes into their creature form; while her senses of smell and hearing were always advanced, she only had enhanced night-vision when her eyes were in their glowing golden state. Quietly, she nudged Yang’s shoulder.

The sleeping blonde just rolled over and wacked Blake in the face with a flailing arm. The Were growled softly. Of course, her human mate would fall asleep after promising to speak with her sister. Luckily, Blake was experienced enough to transform specific aspects of herself without changing others. Or, put another way, her eyes were luminescent, but her nails were still blunt and short. As such, Blake wasn’t concerned about hurting her beloved when she licked her finger and shoved it in Yang’s ear.
“GYAAAAHHHH!” Yang cried out, flopping around in her bag like a wet fish. Blake slapped her hand over the girl. Even with her superhuman strength, it was difficult; Yang was stronger than she looked, and she looked like a professional volleyball player. Probably a result of whatever the heck she and her father were descended from, alongside her perpetually high body-temperature.

“Shhhhh!” the Were hissed, putting a finger to her lips. Yang stopped thrashing and frowned at her. Still, she did as she was told, so Blake removed the hand from her mouth.

“We’re talking about this later,” the blond whispered.

“After you fall asleep?” Blake asked. If Yang could pick one word to describe her smile it would be “catty.”

Now came the hard part. The blond turned over to Ruby. Like her, the girl was snoring loudly. Blake moved to wake her, but Yang grabbed her wrist. No, she shook her head. Blake paused in concern but acquiesced to her mate’s instructions. Yang let go and, closing her hand into a fist, brought it down hammer-like on Ruby’s stomach.

“HOOOOONNNNK-OOOFFF-HHHSSSSS!” Ruby’s reaction was like a bizarre movie sound-effect. Yang’s hand had come down in mid snore, cutting off the inhalation as Ruby was flung back into consciousness. The elder sister pulled her hand away as Vampire instincts took over, the young bloodsucker’s fangs dropping (and rising) as she hissed a warning. Yang had to suppress a shudder; in the dark, it looked like Ruby’s teeth had morphed into a mouthful of fangs, more savage-looking than Blake’s. Granted, she knew this wasn’t the truth—the truth was even more bizarre—but it was still a little unsettling.

“Yang?” Ruby whispered. It sounded harsh with her fangs out, and the fangs themselves made a clicking noise as they brushed against each other when she spoke. Realizing what she was doing, the young Vampire drew them back. However, her eyes continued to glisten with reflective light. “What was that for?” she asked.

“I promised we’d talk, didn’t I?” Yang asked, ignoring an eye-roll from the dark-haired Creature-girl behind her. “What’s up with you, Rubes?”

“What do you mean?” Ruby asked.

“You growled when Weiss refused to sleep beside you, and then needed me an Blake to stop you from going over there and doing whatever it is you were planning on doing!” Yang said. “That’s ignoring your insistence on sitting next to Weiss every possible moment we’ve been here. And don’t think I didn’t notice you stop yourself from following after her into the shower!”

Ruby’s blush was luckily hidden by the darkness from her sister’s eyes (but unluckily not from Blake’s). “What’s so bad about that? I mean, we are dating, aren’t we?”

“No, you’re not,” Blake said. “Weiss specifically agreed to go out with you to see if the two of you could work as a couple, and you haven’t even done that yet.”

“Even if you had, you’re getting way too clingy, Rubes,” Yang said. “Wanting to spend every minute of the day with her this early on, and getting angry when she wants space? That is not a healthy relationship.”

Ruby hung her head. “I know,” she said. “I know, it’s just . . . it’s like she’s the sun or something.”
“Yes, a wonderful thing for a Vampire to say about a potential date,” Blake remarked.

“That’s not the point,” Ruby said. “I mean, when I look at her, everything seems to revolve around her. It’s like I’ll forget to breathe if I look too long—and I know that’s not a big deal for me—but it’s how I feel and just, just the thought that she might turn me down . . .” Ruby shuddered, wrapping her arms around herself. “I feel something inside me breaking, shattering, and her smile is the only thing to make it whole again. I felt it last night when I bit her, and we were watching to see if she would recover. And, when Uncle Qrow made me go hunting, all I could think about was her, so when she said she didn’t want to sleep beside me, I just, I just . . .”

Ruby couldn’t find the words to finish, to express how scared and hurt she was, but she felt a pair of strong, warm arms wrap around her tightly. Her big sister rocked her gently. “Poor Ruby,” Yang crooned. “My baby sis fell in love at first sight.”

“Figures,” Blake said, scooting over. Hesitantly, she added herself to the embrace, enveloping the younger girl in sisterly love. “Just remember, Ruby, real life isn’t like fairy tales.”

“. . . I know,” Ruby said. “But if we work hard, we can get a happily ever after, Blake. Just like our parents did.”

“Happily ever after doesn’t last, Ruby,” Blake whispered. “People die. Even Vampires.”

“That’s not the point, Blake,” Ruby said, looking up. “Happily ever after doesn’t mean forever. It just means time, together.”

“Together. Just like our parents did,” Yang repeated. Her mind traveled back twelve years, to when she and Ruby had had two mothers alongside a father and an uncle. Before a headstone on a cliff became Summer’s home. Before Raven ran off looking for answers, never to return. To the days when her parents’ happily ever after looked like it would last forever.

Chapter End Notes

Some of you have probably already guessed Pyrrha’s secret. Sadly, I won’t confirm it until later.

I more or less stole Ruby's lines from DOCTOR WHO, specifically "The Husband's of River Song." I thought it was a beautiful, powerful statement about love and life.
OK, here’s one,” Yang said. “What is the difference between Sine and Cosine?”

“The sine of an angle is the ratio of the length of the opposite side to the length of the hypotenuse,” Weiss answered.

“Whereas the cosine of an angle is the ratio of the length of the adjacent side to the length of the hypotenuse: so called because it is the sine of the complementary or co-angle,” Pyrrha finished.

“GHHHHAAAAA!” Ruby cried. “We’ve been going over this for hours!”

Weiss frowned. “Ruby, we are trying to study for our finals, you know.”

“I know that, but we’ve been doing it for literally hours!” the Vampire said. “Can’t we take a break? Go somewhere for lunch?”

Weiss opened her mouth to say something, but Blake cut her off. “She has a point; it’s one now, and we all got up at eight, more or less.”

Weiss scowled at the memory. Ruby had apparently considered it a good idea to use a whistle to wake the group up. The only consolation prize was that various some of the others had more sensitive ears than she did.

Neptune threw his two cents in. “Yeah, and we all started in on studying while munching on our toast and cereal.”

“Yeah, and that’s hardly breakfast,” Sun added.

“I’m surprised Nora hasn’t passed out from sugar-loss,” Jaune said with a smile. When nobody laughed, he cringed. “Too much?” he asked.

Pyrrha spared her orange-haired friend a glance. Nora was as depressing as ever, just staring down at her book, absent-mindedly stroking Zwei.

“Too soon,” his girlfriend said at length.

“Sorry,” he said in a subdued voice.

“Not a lot you can do,” Yang said, shaking her head at the sight of the girl. Standing up from her place at the table, she placed her hands on her hips and declared, “Come on, let’s take a break for lunch. Losing an hour won’t kill us.”

“An hour?” Weiss cried, horrified. “We still haven’t touched the biology work yet! Or the languages! We can’t leave for an hour and expect to get everything done!”
“How much time do you usually spend studying?” Blake asked, raising an eyebrow.

“As much as possible, obviously. I have to spend some time fencing on Saturday, of course. Yesterday was a little unstable between that and . . . everything, but I wouldn’t be able to keep my high academic success if I wasn’t taking every advantage I could.”

“Then how come Pyrrha has a higher grade than you in almost every class?” Yang asked.

Weiss flushed. “Shut, just shut up, you! I have to study! I have to Ace my classes. It’s the only way I’ll get into Harvard or Yale or whatever will make my father—” The heiress shut herself up.

“Then how come Pyrrha has a higher grade than you in almost every class?” Yang asked.

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“Just an hour, Weiss,” Ruby said. Weiss turned to her and wondered if her blood-drinking maybe girlfriend had somehow switched eyes with her own dog. “Probably won’t even be that long. We’ll just go somewhere, get some food, ooh! I could even help you study while we wait if it makes you feel better!”

Weiss tried to look away, but found it difficult. It probably wouldn’t do much harm, she thought, ignoring the murmurs behind her, which were mostly something to the effect of how Ruby shouldn’t have been encouraging her. Eventually, she said “All right. Where should we go?”

“Weiss,” Ruby said, standing up. “I’ll drive you, Jaune, and Nora. Anyone else?”

“I can fit the others,” Neptune said, putting his arm around Sun. Ruby raised her hand slightly and opened her mouth, then froze. The lowered the hand and closed her mouth. “No,” she said. “We should be good, Pyrrha.”

Weiss frowned. Her feelings from Ruby’s actions the past night at war with her feelings from seeing Ruby so downcast. She decided to ignore it. For now, anyway.

“OK,” the waitress said as she looked down at her notepad. “That’s two cobb salads, one fish sandwich with side salad, three cheeseburgers—two with fries, one with summer berries and no pickle—one Rueben sandwich with chips, one dinner-sized order of meatloaf with mashed potatoes and broccoli, and one bacon macaroni and cheese with side salad. Do I have that right?”

“You got it, gorgeous,” Neptune said, grinning at the woman. She blushed, muttered something Weiss couldn’t understand, and scurried off to place the orders.

Yang snorted. “You’re lucky your boyfriend is so forgiving, Neptune,” she said.

“What?” the dye-haired boy said. He gave Yang another of his infamous grins. “I can’t help it if I’m irresistible.”

“Yet more proof you should be called a mermaid,” Sun quipped. “Anyway, I’ve gotten used to it.”

“Hm, I guess I shouldn’t be upset he chose you over me, then,” Weiss commented. Beside her, Blake offered a nod of approval. The others were more vocal.

“Sick burn!” Ruby cried

“The Ice Queen speaks! Hear and tremble, lesser mortals!” Yang declared.

“I am not an Ice Queen, you oaf!” Weiss yelled.

“You are kind of cold, Weiss,” Jaune said. The blond boy withered under the freezing glare. It was times like this he guessed he shouldn’t be upset Weiss chose Neptune over him, aside from every
minute he spent with Pyrrha, of course.

“I am not cold,” Weiss growled.

“Yes, you are,” Blake said.

“But only to people who don’t know you,” Ruby interjected. Weiss turned to her, and Ruby gave a
cheesy grin. Weiss dropped her head; why couldn’t she stay mad at Ruby?

“Fine,” she said. “I’ll admit I can be a bit . . . difficult.”

“That’s putting it mildly,” Yang remarked. That led to another protracted debate-slash-argument-
slash-screaming contest, but the barrier had been crossed. The friends began to speak openly. Nora,
despite being deprived of a Zwei to hold, even managed a small smile. Weiss tentatively asked about
the Creature community as a whole.

How many different types of Creature were there?

It was hard to say. So many myths could easily have been caused by the same Creature, and there
was no telling how many species had gone extinct. No, it wasn’t always humans, Blake hastened to
add. Before they had to hide, Creatures were each other’s greatest enemies; they’d fought each other
to the death over territory, territories containing limited shelter and a limited supply of human prey
and/or breeding stock. Not that they still looked at humans that way, Ruby interjected.

Were Dragons and Unicorns and such real?

Not likely, and if they were, they’d gone extinct long ago: impossible to hide from humans. That
said, some people believed there were still Phoenixes hiding in remote mountain ranges in China and
India. Neptune explained there were still pods of mermaids living in the ocean, the one place big
even that they could comfortably hide from humanity forever. Or at least for another century or
two. Mermaids, though, were isolationists and had never wanted much of anything from the other
tribes.

Where did Creatures come from?

Same place as humans: no one really knew, but everyone had an idea. Some people thought they
evolved alongside humans or even from humans while others thought they’d been created by the
power of various deific figures. And those were the normal ones.

“Aliens?” Weiss asked.

“What, haven’t you heard of the Ancient Astronauts theory?” Yang asked. Grinning she explained,
“Since a bunch of humans—”

“Crazy humans,” Blake interjected.

Yang ignored her girlfriend “think that humanity’s stories of gods and heroes were really just one-
sided, misunderstood accounts of encounters with incredibly advanced aliens, some Creatures
thought maybe the aliens played around with DNA some and made them.”

“There’s also the Atlantis Theory,” Ruby said, looking semi-serious. “Atlantis was this super-
advanced civilization, right? So, what if they used alchemy or ancient super-tech or something to turn
humans into monsters!”

Weiss ignored the fact that her maybe-girlfriend had just called herself and her fellows monsters.
“What kind of ‘ancient super-tech’ could do that?”

“Radioactive meteor crystals?” Ruby suggested.

Weiss just dropped her head. Those with inhumanly acute hearing heard a mumbled “Dolt!” come from her.

“Then of course, there’s the Mother Theory,” Blake said. The

“What’s the Mother Theory?” Weiss asked. After the last two, she was mentally preparing herself for Gary Larson levels of bizarre.

“The theory that every race is descended from a “patient zero,” the first of their kind, an Alpha,” Blake explained. “And the Alphas were all born of a single primordial entity.”

“Where’d that idea come from?” Sun asked. “I’ve never heard of it.”

“Lots of human cultures feature a mother figure for monsters,” Pyrrha explained.

“Lilith, Tiamat, Echidna, Ymir,” Jaune listed. Everyone looked at the normally clueless boy in confusion. “I looked into it for a research project a few years ago, right after I’d just found out about . . . all of you. Lilith was Adam’s first wife in Jewish folklore; they say she was cast out of the Garden of Eden and gave birth to Vampires or Succubi or Demons depending on the story to have them take revenge on Adam’s children. Tiamat was mother of dragons and monsters in Sumerian mythology, and Echidna gave birth to a lot of the famous monsters in Greek stories. Ymir was Norse, and he was actually male, so maybe not strictly a mother, I guess. Anyway, he was the father of the first giants whose descendants appear all over the place in Norse mythology.”
Weiss blinked. For a moment, she almost opened her mouth to say how surprised she was Jaune had put so much effort into studying. She stopped herself, though, when she saw Blake glaring at her. It wouldn’t be fair to Pyrrha anyway, she thought.

Actually, it wouldn’t be fair to Jaune. She’d spent enough time with the boy yesterday to realize that he did study hard. He might not be as smart as Pyrrha, herself, or (surprisingly) Ruby, but he made
up for it through sheer grit. There was nothing to mock about Jaune, she decided.

Back at Pyrrha’s, the group resumed studying. At a quarter of six, Yang got up to start working on dinner. She was making quesadillas, she said, and asked Weiss what she wanted on hers.

“Chicken, please,” Weiss said. Handing Pyrrha a couple pieces of paper, she asked, “Will you check over this for me?” On the papers, she’d re-written (from memory) her answer to a previous essay question, “What is Nationalism and what role did it play in the First and/or Second World Wars?”

“Sure, Weiss,” Pyrrha said, taking essay. Blinking, she examined the papers, then flipped them over. “Weiss,” she said. “You used both of these sheets . . .”

“Yes,” Weiss said.

“On both sides?” Pyrrha asked.

Jaune turned. “Weiss, you wrote a four page essay?”

“Yes,” Weiss said.

“Doesn’t that seem a little much?” Sun asked.

“I only wrote two pages when we had it on the test,” Neptune said.

“Page and a half,” Jaune said.

“I’m applying to Ivy League schools,” Weiss said. “I have to get the highest possible grades and submit the best possible essays if I want to be accepted.”

“I hate to be the one to tell you this, Weiss, but the deadline for college applications past,” Neptune said. “About a month ago.”

“Yeah, and it’s not like you need the scholarship,” Sun added.

Weiss huffed. “There is no reason for me not to try my hardest on my final test. I will be Salutatorian; I know I can’t beat Pyrrha for Valedictorian, but my family expects it, and I intend to show everyone exactly how capable I am.”

“You go, Weiss!” Ruby cheered. The others looked to her. Blushing from the attention she was receiving, the young Vampire muttered. “I mean, it sounds like a good goal: be all you can be and all that.”

“. . . Thank you, Ruby,” Weiss said. She fidgeted in her seat. “Yang, do you need any help with dinner?” she asked getting up. Weiss didn’t actually know that much about cooking, but she needed something to distract her from the girl sitting across the table from her.

“Wha—ah, no, Weiss! I’m good. You can sit back down!” Yang said, frantically waving her hands as the white-haired girl approached. She was oblivious to the havoc she was wreaking on Pyrrha’s kitchen as she did so; her right hand held the cutting knife that had just sliced through several kinds of meat.

“Watch it, Yang! You’re getting blood every . . . where . . .” Weiss’ voice trailed off as she spied what was on the counter. It was already half-diced but Weiss had read enough science textbooks to recognize it.
It was a heart. On the cutting board on Pyrrha’s counter sat the bloody remains of a heart.

“. . . Weiss . . .” The heiress turned around at the sound of her name. Behind her was Blake. She wasn’t fidgeting the way Ruby had when she’d met Weiss in the hallway. Blake looked defeated, standing stock still, her eyes glued to the floor.

Weiss sucked her breath in. Blake was a Werewolf—cat, whatever. Weres ate hearts. Sun and Neptune had discussed this with her earlier. Ergo, Blake ate hearts. Blake ate hearts. Blake most likely ran out into the woods in the middle of the night to hunt down animals and rip their hearts out to eat.

“It’s all right, Blake,” Weiss said. She had taken speech coaching lessons and realized her delivery was awful, but all she could do was press on. “I know that you have dietary . . . needs, like Ruby does, and, I know you don’t eat human hearts. Well, I suppose you might, but they come from people who have already died, so there’s no great loss. Although, some cultures do find such practices abhorrent—taking organs from a dead body, I mean. I know most human cultures look down on cannibalism already. Is it even cannibalism, though? I mean, you are from a different species—”

“Weiss,” Blake cut her off. “You’re rambling worse than Ruby.”

“Hey!” said redhead cried from the table.

Weiss huffed, crossing her arms. “Well, I apologize for trying to express my acceptance to you. Maybe next time I’ll just be silent and let you stew.” Weiss mentally kicked herself. This was why she had so much trouble making friends.

“Yeah!” Ruby said, zipping next to Weiss. “Don’t give her a hard time when she’s trying to be nice, Blake!” She held her hand out to Weiss, palm up.

After a moment’s hesitation, the heiress gave the Vampiress a low-five. Ruby smiled before zipping back to her seat and burying her head in her book. Weiss raised an eyebrow at the younger woman’s behavior and fought the urge to smile.

Yang had no such compunctions. “Awwwww, Little Sis is so protective of her girlfriend.”

Weiss’ face turned the same color as the disembodied organ on the cutting board. She opened her mouth to chastise Yang when Ruby beat her to it.

“Shut up, Yang!” The assembled group looked at Ruby. She was blushing, yes, but she was also scowling.


“We talked about this last night. Weiss and I aren’t dating. She’s not my girlfriend yet,” Ruby said, still scowling (and ignoring Weiss’ reaction to her statement). “Not that she will or won’t—not the point. The point is, you crossed the line Yang.”

Yang shook her head. “All right. I’m sorry, you two. That was too much.”

“It was,” Ruby said, before letting her own breath out and dropping the frown. Turning to the girl beside her, she asked, “Weiss, could we talk, please? Alone?”

“. . . All right,” Weiss said, trying to ignore the strangeness. She also tried to ignore sense of déjà vu as Ruby led her off to another part of the house so they could talk alone. Hopefully this wouldn’t end
like Prom did. When Ruby stopped the heiress spoke first. “What is it, Ruby? Why did you snap at Yang like that?”

Ruby’s hands began playing with themselves again. “Weiss, I . . . I spoke with the others last night, and I realize I was trying to rush things with you.” Kicking the wall (and Weiss didn’t miss the sound that resonated at the kick; Ruby was definitely stronger than she appeared), she continued. “I’m sorry Weiss. I’m so sorry.” Ruby leaned forward, steadying herself against the wall with her hands. “I want this, us, to work. I want it so bad . . . But I realize now . . . I can’t expect you to want it as bad as me, or to move as fast as me . . . So when Yang called you my girlfriend . . .” Ruby swallowed. “It brought up all this conflicting emotional . . . mess in me, and I just, I just snapped.” Ruby shook her head straitening up. “Guess I should apologize to Yang, huh?” Weiss could see the smile Ruby wore now was the definition of self-flagellation. The Vampire walked past her, heading back to the kitchen.

“Wait!” Weiss called. Ruby stopped and looked back at her, cocking her head in a manner that was reminiscent of her older sister. “Ruby . . . I—that is, we . . .”

“Yeah, Weiss?” Ruby asked. There was an edge in her voice. An urgency.

Weiss opened her mouth to reply when they both heard a loud scream. “What was that?” Weiss asked.

“It sounded like Nora,” Ruby said. From the kitchen the pair heard a loud commotion. Ruby bolted down the hall. After a moment of shock Weiss took off after her.

This gave her a front row seat to see Ruby plow into Yang who had been barreling towards them. “Ouch!” The Vampire cried.

“Ruby, what the heck!” Yang yelled from her position on the floor. Bulky though she was, she had been knocked down when she’d collided with her baby sister. More proof that Ruby was stronger than she looked. Weiss noticed Yang’s eyes were a vivid red.

“Yang, what’s going on?” Ruby asked.

“Ren’s been found,” the blond replied, getting up. She took Ruby’s hand, and Weiss had to ignore the odd feeling in her stomach. “We have to go. Now!”

Chapter End Notes

This is the last of the chapters I have written up until this point. The next chapter will come . . . eventually. Sorry, that’s how it is.
Blood Is Spilled, Part 1

Chapter Notes

Three quick warnings before we begin:

1) These two will probably be the last couple of chapter for a while. I have other fics I want to work on (and school work I should probably consider doing). They're posted on Fanfiction under the same name, but I'll see about reposting over here.

2) I originally planned for this all to be one chapter, but then decided it was too long. So you get two chapters for the price of one. Bare that in mind if you see any weirdness pop up.

3) These chapters are going to EARN the "Mature" rating. There will be LOTS of violence here with lots of accompanying moral gray-ity. Also, this one will have swearing. Lots and lots of swearing.

4) (It was originally three, but then I thought of another one) This chapter will contain Original Characters whose very existence heavily modify's the backstory of characters from the show. If this offends you . . . sorry? I don't really know what to say.

Additional Note: Now that I've FINALLY figured out how to use Ao3's posting function (more or less), I went back and modified my previous chapters, generally cleaning them up and adding pictures. Go check 'em out if you haven't already.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Do you even know where we’re going?” Weiss asked.

“Dad said they were at a warehouse on the Southside docks,” Yang replied. Like at lunch, she had taken the keys to Ren’s Jeep and was driving herself, Blake, Ruby, and Weiss to their destination. Neptune drove himself and Sun while Pyrrha had Jaune and Nora in her SUV.

“You know Southside is the worst part of town, right?” Weiss asked, nerves creeping into her voice. “There are assaults and robberies there every day.” That was untrue, but no one bothered to correct her. It was only a slight exaggeration.

“You don’t have to come with us,” Blake said. “I’m sure Sun and Neptune wouldn’t mind taking you back . . .”

Weiss frowned. “No. Ren is my friend, and I’m not going to let . . . you all go run off by yourselves.”

The heiress felt a pair of cold fingers wrap around her hand. Looking over, she saw Ruby give her a smile. Not a big, goofy one like the younger girl normally gave. This one was calmer and somehow warmer. “It’s OK, Weiss. We’ll protect you,” she said, gently squeezing her hand. What Weiss heard was “I’ll protect you.”

Weiss blushed a little, looking away. The quartet rode in silence for half an hour or so. As they approached Vale’s low-rent, high crime district, Weiss (still holding Ruby’s hand) found her voice
Again. “All right, so do you know which warehouse your parents are at?”

“Nope,” Yang said, turning left at an intersection. She honked for the other drivers to follow her.

“How do you expect to find them?”

“We drive around, looking for whichever one has Dad or Qrow’s car parked in front of it,” the diver replied, too cheerfully.

“Who took Ren?” Weiss asked.

Yang’s smile disappeared, her eyes focusing on the road. Blake closed her eyes and let out a single breath. Without opening them, she spoke a single word. “Specialists.”

“What?” both girls in the backseat cried.

“Those jerks are HERE?” Ruby asked. Yang flinched at the question. Ruby missed the way Blake glared at her sister, making Yang offer a weak grin in reply. Thankfully, their silent conversation was drowned out by Weiss.

“I thought you said those freaks weren’t anywhere near here!” she shouted.

“They shouldn’t be!” Ruby said. “Yang, did you know about this? Did Dad or Uncle Qrow tell you?”


“Then why did Sun and Neptune . . .”

“Sun and Neptune are idiots,” Yang said. “Well, Sun is, at least, and Neptune’s parents try to keep him as shielded as possible.”

“They still would have told him about the Specialists,” Blake said. “Actually, that might be the problem. They warned him so much about so many things that he can’t take it all seriously anymore.”

“So, the . . . Specialists are here, and they have Ren,” Weiss said. “What are we going to do? Is there some kind of . . . Creature Law Enforcement we could call?”

“We are the Creature Law Enforcement, Weiss,” Ruby explained. “Uh . . . that is . . . not us specifically; I mean kind of police ourselves.”

“What?” Weiss asked. “You mean your Uncle and father just went to fight experts in killing Creatures on their own? Are they insane? You’re father’s practically human!”

“He’s also a champion MMA fighter,” Yang said. “And Uncle Qrow’s pretty old. I don’t remember for sure, but I think he was born in the 1870’s.”

“And vampires become more powerful as they get older,” Weiss said.

“Not really,” Ruby said. “Well, I mean we get a little stronger, but it’s mostly experience. Uncle Qrow’s been around for about 140 years, and he’s spent a lot of that time fighting people who really wanted to kill him.”

“Besides,” Yang said. “Qrow and Dad aren’t alone. Nora’s parents are with them.”
Weiss looked at the other blonde askance. “And what difference does that make? Nora’s human so they must be too.”

“Mr. Valkyrie is a retired Army Ranger, for one thing,” Blake said.

“And Army Ranger?” Weiss repeated. “As in . . .”

“As in the elite, rapid-deployable light infantry unit,” Yang answered. “Now as for Mrs. Valkyrie, well . . .”

“COME BACK AND FIGHT ME, YOU COWARDS!”

Qrow turned towards his brother-in-law. “You know, I think that woman is the scariest monster here.”

“You really should stop using that word,” Tai replied, his voice tired. They’d had this argument before.

“What, you don’t think she’s scary?” Qrow asked. The two men stood outside a warehouse that was in better shape than the others. They’d just finished dragging away and tying up the last of guards (those still alive anyway). Now, they were debating whether or not to join their friends inside. Qrow’s eyes widened a moment, before he tackled Tai. The blonde man almost asked why, before a barrage of buckshot flew through the space the men’s heads had formerly occupied.

“STOP RUNNING AND LET ME SHOOT YOU ALREADY!”

“Yeah, I’m sure that’ll make ‘em stop running,” Qrow snarked. Then he cocked his head as though listening to something. He gripped the blade in his hand, a wicked-looking, scythe-like weapon.

“Heads up. They’re coming out the left.”
Tai frowned and swung the metal baseball bat he held against his hand. Time to be serious. “Think they’ll be armed?” he asked.

“Probably with those fancy crossbows of their’s, if anything,” his brother-in-law answered. “They probably dropped their stuff when Heather started lighting the place up. Hard to carry a weapon when you’re scrambling to escape the crazy chick with the sawed-off 12 gauge.”

The blond man cringed. “She’ll avoid hitting Ren, right? OK, dumb question,” he said when Qrow gave him the same look he would have given if Tai had asked if fire burned things.

“Here they come,” Qrow said, running around the car. Tai took the other side, hoisting his baseball bat. The door to the warehouse burst open as four men ran out like a herd of stampeding cattle. The lead man ran head-first into Tai’s swinging bat. The big man felt the ringing metal vibrate up his arms and stumbled back. He was still better off than the other guy, who fell down with a flat, broken nose. The next man met his end as Qrow turned him into a Pez-Dispenser with his knife. The Vampire didn’t waste time and threw the dead weight away, spinning in place to slice into the stomach of the third man in line. The one had been holding a machete, but he dropped it to try to stem the bleeding. Qrow’s blade slid into the man’s temple, and the trying stopped.

It was then the in-laws ran into trouble, literally. They attempted to charge the last man at the same time. This one was the most heavily-armed; as Qrow had predicted, he held a crossbow. An unusual crossbow with two bows. He was back-pedaling, trying to put some distance between himself and the others to raise and fire his weapon. Tai Yang was closer and got in front of Qrow, swinging his bat out wide to deliver a devastating swing. Unfortunately, he stepped on the machete Qrow’s second victim had dropped. It slid under Tai’s foot, causing the man to fall forward. Qrow tripped over him, but his Vampiric reflexes allowed the dark-haired man to stay on two legs. It did, however, slow him down.

“Ouch!” Qrow cried as the arrow struck him in the chest. He stumbled back; the arrow had pierced his heart all right, and while that wouldn’t kill him like the Vampires of folklore, it did weaken him. Worse, he could feel the hollow bolt injecting Dead Man’s Blood into his system. With a burst of strength, Qrow yanked the arrow out, but the damage was done. He fell to his knees, panting and disorientated. Beside him, a groggy Tai pushed his face up from the ground.

Meanwhile Specialist ambled over beside them and reached down for Qrow’s lost blade.

“BANG!”

A bullet ripped through the side of the man’s head, giving Qrow a firsthand look at the difference between entry and exit wounds. The dead man dropped the crossbow and flopped over like a puppet whose controller had dropped the strings. Looking back at the door, Qrow saw a burly man with a thick black mane and an equally thick beard holding a shirtless, bloody teenage boy with one hand and holding a smoking Berretta in the other.

The man carefully advanced, aiming his pistol in all directions, always keeping his body between the gun and the boy. Finally, he emerged into the night air and holstered his weapon. “You’re out of practice, Qrow,” he said.

“Can’t say I was ever an expert on killing humans,” the Vampire remarked. “How is he?”

Beside him, a recovered Tai stood up. “Cole? Ren! Thank God. Is he—?”

“He’ll live,” the now identified Cole said, lowering the boy to the ground. The young man moaned softly, and the giant gently rubbed his charge’s brow, his eyes softening. It was a surprisingly
parental gesture given the two looked nothing alike. “He’ll live. No thanks to them,” he whispered.

“How’s Heather?” Tai asked.

“I’ll be better when my boy is home again with these bastards’ livers in his stomach,” a woman said. She marched out of the building a shotgun in her hands and preceded by a pair of men in dark clothes with their hands on their heads. One was a white-haired, bearded man. Aside from the lack of glasses and the black clothes, he could have passed as an evil Colonel Sanders. The second was a wide-eyed young man, more of a kid really. The three men grimaced. It was unsettling to see someone so young involved in such activities.

“I don’t think that’d make him feel better,” Qrow remarked, wiping his blade with a cleaning rag he’d have to throw out later. Nothing ruined cloth like blood and brain matter. Even if the cloth was just a rag. He cocked his head.

“Oh no,” Tai Yang groaned. “Don’t tell me it’s the cops. I really don’t want to explain this to the cops.”

“I don’t hear sirens,” Qrow said. “But there’s a few cars pulling up. Three or four, I think.”

“Reinforcements?” Cole asked casually, as he drew his Barrette and ejected the magazine to load a full clip.

“Maybe,” Qrow remarked. “Doesn’t sound like tactical vehicles. In fact . . . I think it’s three different models.”

Heather’s frown increased. “Why would three civilian cars be headed . . . here.” At this point a trio of very recognizable cars pulled. “What the fuck—”

“—are you kids doing here?” the orange-haired woman yelled.

“I guess Mrs. Valkyrie isn’t very happy to see us,” Yang said as she parked the Jeep.

“Probably not,” Blake remarked.

Weiss was more confused that entertained. “That’s Nora’s mother?” she asked.

“Yeah, she’s a P.I. who used to be a cop, and between her and her husband, she has this SUPER-big, super-cool arsenal that she sometimes lets me check out—when she’s there, of course, she wouldn’t let me look at it on my own; that’d be dangerous—and . . .” Ruby had to pause for a breath before she continued.

“That’s enough, Ruby,” Weiss said. “I just . . . she doesn’t act much like Nora.”

“More like Nora doesn’t act much like her parents,” Yang said. “Speaking of, we’d better get out now before she has to ask us again.”

The four got out of their vehicle as the other two cars were parked and emptied of occupants. Pyrrha didn’t even put the car in park before a pink-clad, orange-haired missile shot out of her vehicle accompanied by a dog and screaming at the top of its lungs, “RRRRRREEEEEEENNNNNNN!”

Nora almost crashed into Ren before the big man caught her. “Careful, Lightning Bug,” he said. “Ren’s not ready for a lot of excitement right now.”

“... Re-en,” Nora sniffled. Looking down at the boy, she began to cry. Weiss couldn’t help but
feel for her. The boy looked awful. His torso was covered in cuts, burns, and bruises in various stages of healing. Some were almost faded, while others were fresh and still bleeding. On closer inspection, some of his fingers looked misshapen, as though they’d been broken.

She thought he was asleep or perhaps comatose, until he groaned. “. . . Nora . . .”

The girl’s tears increased, but she seemed to become stronger now that Ren knew she was there. “I’m here, Sweety,” she said.

“S-sorry if I worried you,” he whispered, a smile forming despite his obvious discomfort.

“It wasn’t that bad,” Nora said, trying to match his nonchalance. A difficult feat when she was starting to hiccup. “Hic! I barely noticed you were gone.”

“Flirt later you too,” Mrs. Valkyrie growled. “I’m asking again, what the fuck are you kids doing here?” She turned to glare at Weiss. “And with her?”

Weiss cringed. Ruby took her hand again while Pyrrha stepped forward to answer. “We knew Nora wouldn’t stay back now that Ren was discovered,” she explained. “So, instead of letting her rush off on her own, the rest of us decided to accompany her.”

Mrs. Valkyrie made a sound that would’ve been called a grunt had she been a man, before mumbling something about “Stupid, stubborn kids.”

The big man—the one Weiss wasn’t familiar with—frowned. Looking down at Nora, he said. “Nora, Lightning Bug,” he said. “How did you know we were here?”

Nora hiccupped. “Hic! Yang told us, Daddy,” she said.

Mr. Valkyrie—like Ruby, Nora apparently got a lot of her appearance from her mother—looked up and spoke very slowly. “Really? Yang, how did you find us?”

"Dad told me where to find you,” the blonde answered immediately.

“Wow,” Blake whispered. “I’ll bet he didn’t see that bus coming.”

“Wha—I did not!” Tai Yang cried. It might have been more convincing if he looked like he believed it. Instead, the man was frowning, cross-eyed, obviously trying to remember exactly what he’d told Yang.

"Technically, he just said was a warehouse on the Southside docks," Ruby said, leaping to her parent’s defense. “Yang just figured we’d drive around, and eventually we’d find your cars. Instead, we found all of you standing out here.”

“Sounds about right,” Qrow remarked, earning himself a dirty look from Tai.

“Listen, you kids just take Ren home, all right?” Tai said. “We’ll talk about this later.”

“Oh, we will,” Mrs. Valkyrie said. While it was obviously meant for the Xaio Long patriarch, she was glaring at Weiss. The heiress struggled not to wilt under that look as she would her father’s and squeezed Ruby’s hand for comfort. The Vampiress rubbed her fingers over Weiss’ knuckles. In the corner of her eye, Weiss saw Ruby flash her a smile.

“All right, Dad,” Yang said. “Come on, gang. Show’s over. Everybody back into the cars.”

Everyone did, with almost no fuss. Sun commented “So much for showing up all heroic and saving
the day,” which earned him a whack to the head from Neptune, but that was all. Looking back, Weiss recalled how the blonde girl almost never gave orders, but the group had always followed them when she had. At school, Yang was generally considered a bimbo; sometimes, she even acted the part. It was amazing how little people knew about her. Weiss hoped she wouldn’t develop paranoia because of her friends.

Sometime during the confusion, Jaune had gone over to Ren and Nora. Now, he was helping her guide the injured boy into Pyrrha’s SUV, the short redhead refusing to move from his side. Jaune hesitated though, and grabbed Pyrrha before she got into the driver’s seat. Weiss couldn’t make out what they said. Jaune appeared to be asking a question. Pyrrha shook her head, No. Are you sure? Jaune seemed to ask. Pyrrha hesitated, then dropped her head and replied. The blonde boy hugged her, and the taller girl hugged back, giving him a chaste kiss, before handing over the keys. Then, she slid in next to Ren in the back, while Jaune took the wheel.

"What was that about?" Weiss asked Ruby as they got into their own vehicle. Well, technically, it was Ren’s vehicle, once he actually recovered enough to drive it again.

“Jaune thought Pyrrha might want to sit next to Ren,” the Vampire replied. No surprise she had heard them.

“Why?” Weiss asked.

“Drop it, Weiss,” Yang said. She turned the ignition and looked back at the heiress in the mirror. “Just drop it.”

“You’ll find out eventually,” Ruby said, sounding like she was trying to be helpful.

“But it isn’t our story to tell,” Blake said. The statement sounded as though it was directed as much at Ruby as it was at her.

“All right,” Weiss groaned, settling into her seat. She was getting a little tired of all the secrets she was not discovering about her new friends. Did Pyrrha and Ren used to date or something? Considering he’d apparently gone out with Yang in the past and was likely with Nora now, he would have dated the three most desired girls in their class. Weiss considered that a pretty impressive record for an eighteen year-old. Especially an introverted one.

“I can’t believe you told them,” Cole Valkyrie said. Unlike his wife and daughter, his hair was as dark as his homophone. He grew a thick beard that would’ve made a certain pirate captain green with envy and a long, horse-like mane fell down his shoulders. Cole hadn’t raised his voice, but it was stern, as were the eyes leveled on Tai Yang.

Tai Yang rubbed the back of his head. “I didn’t mean to—look, I just meant to say that we’d found Ren—to let them know he was OK—then, Yang demanded to know where we were. I didn’t think I gave them that much to go on.” Tai was uncomfortable being so . . . uncomfortable with another man. He was big and athletic, not easily intimidated, but Cole was the size of bear and, while Tai Yang had a lot of experience in Mixed-Martial Arts and real-life brawls, Cole had once been a trained, professional warrior. The man had likely forgotten more about violence that Tai would ever know.

“You didn’t,” Qrow said. “If you had, they’d of shown up earlier.” Unlike his brother-in-law, Qrow was unintimidated by their large friend. Possibly due to his own abilities, or perhaps merely because Cole wasn’t angry at him.
“You shouldn’t have told any of them until we got him home,” the fourth member of their party growled. Heather Valkyrie, nee MacLeod looked much like her daughter, albeit angrier than anyone had ever seen Nora. Her long, bright hair was pulled into a tight ponytail, secured by a purple hair clip, the only color she wore. Otherwise, she was dressed in black motorcycle leathers. The sawed-off shotgun was strapped to her hip, and she held a pistol in her hand, trained on the three remaining Specialists. “Speaking of which, what she we do with these jackasses?”

“Not a lot we can tell the police,” Qrow muttered. “Otherwise, we wouldn’t have had to do this ourselves.” It was true; police would’ve meant blood-tests and interviews and CSI crap. Not to mention rushing Ren to the nearest emergency room where it was unlikely there was a Creature or Enlightened on staff to cover-up the boy’s . . . oddities. As was often the case with Creature-related issues, the victim’s family and friends had no choice but to cowboy up and deal with it themselves. Unfortunately for his kidnappers.

“It doesn’t matter what you do to us,” the Colonel Sanders wannabe said. White-haired and bearded, he looked like Colonel Sanders in a black ops uniform. “More will come until you and all your wretched kind are extinct—Uuuk!”

“Sanctimonious son of bitch,” Heather growled as the man struggled to regain breath after the vicious kick to the stomach. “My husband and I are human, asshole. More human than any of you are.”

“Liar,” spat the one Qrow and Tai had captured. “If you’re that,” he saw how Heather’s eyes narrowed as she glared at him,” boy’s parents, you’re as inhuman as he is. Those genes aren’t recessive.”

“We adopted him, moron,” Heather said. “After psychos like you slaughtered his original family.”

“Then, you are human?” the youngster said. “But . . . but, don’t you know what they are? What they do?”

“We do,” Cole said. “We’ve had Ren with us for twelve years and met others like him. And, in that time, we’ve seen them grow and learn. Work and play. Laugh and cry. Love and dream. As we do.”

“But . . . but . . .” the man stuttered. Tears began forming in his eyes. “They eat people.”

“Some of us do,” Qrow said. “Some of us get by on animals. You want to kill everyone with a hunting license?” He looked down at the young man contemptuously. “It’s finally sinking in, isn’t it? What you’ve been killing, they weren’t monsters; they were people.”

“They were monsters,” Evil Sanders spat. His head then snapped backwards as Heather pistol-whipped him. When he righted himself, a cut above his left eye was seeping. He glared at the offending woman. The youngster’s bowed his head, tears falling from his eyes as he began reciting prayers. The third man ignored the whole thing.

“This is getting out of hand.” Cole said. “We need to decide how to deal with these three.” He already knew her answer, even if he knew it would be . . . unpleasant.

“Kill ‘em,” Heather said. At her blunt reply, the one with the broken nose paled, while the Sanders lookalike tried to straighten up as he glared defiantly at them. The weeper continued to pray.

“Blood for blood and mercy for mercy,” Qrow quoted. “I guess when in doubt, go with the classics.”
“No,” Tai Yang said. “We should let them go.”

“You want to let these bastards go?” Heather growled. “After what they did to Ren?”

“You heard him,” Tai insisted. “We kill these guys, we only make them martyrs to their cause. We need to show them that they’re wrong about us. That we’re not the enemy.”

“He raises a point, Heather,” Cole said, slowly. It was obvious his fatherly concern for Ren was at war with his militaristic sense of honor. Though this was an unconventional and unprofessional battle, these men were functionally prisoners of war, and both international law and basic human decency demanded that POWs be treated with mercy and dignity. It might not have always been practical, but it had saved his spirit from being crushed by guilt under the unpleasantries a front-line soldier was required perform in combat.

Heather frowned. She respected, admired even, her husband’s sense of honor, but she wasn’t a soldier. She was a disillusioned cop who’d quit the force before the regulations and legalities could make her sick enough to vomit. Warfare had rules, but in the city, the only law was might makes right. Sad, but true. “Letting three go after ventilating the rest of their buddies won’t make much difference. Except let them know what we look like.”

Qrow grunted. “She has a point, and I don’t anything could convince that old fart to change his opinion of us.” His words clicked as he spoke, his fangs extended. “Now could someone make up their mind? Between the garlic and the blood, the scents here are driving me nuts.”

BANG!

“Gladly,” Heather said.

The Evil Sanders fell backwards, a hole in his forehead, his face still a mask of hate and arrogance. The man beside him, his entire face bloody now, gagged and looked away. He tried to vomit, but nothing came out. He just dry heaved for a fee moments.

The praying youngster now spoke four words again and again. “Forgive us our trespasses. Forgive us our trespasses. Forgive us our trespasses . . .”

Heather ignored him, turning her gun on the other man. He stopped dry heaving and looked up. While he attempted to put on a show of bravado, it was obvious he was terrified. It was the eyes that gave him away. It was always the eyes. For the first time that night, the woman’s anger slipped, and she spoke calmly to her victim. “Do you want to pray too?” The man swallowed and nodded. He bowed his head in silence. Heather was silent as well, for a whole minute. Then, she pulled the trigger. “Rest in peace,” she said as the body collapsed like its comrade.

Turning back to the praying boy, her face contorted in fury once more. “Heather.” Cole tried to get her attention. She ignored him. Grabbing the boy by his arm, she hauled him to his feet and jammed the barrel of the gun under his chin. Looking into his eyes through his tears, she spoke.

“Leave this city. Tonight. And if you ever come near my family or my friends again, I swear I will kill you in the most horrible way I can think of. Understand?” The boy nodded, despite his shaking. Heather shoved him back and he fell down. “Then get,” she said. The boy he scrambled to his feet and off into the night like a bat out of Hell.

“Honey . . .” Cole said, walking up to his wife and putting his arm around her shoulder.

“Shut up, Cole,” she said, her gun dangling in her limp hand. “I just want to get home to my kids.”
Cole nodded. Taking the gun from her, he slowly led her away, back to the car they’d driven here. “And don’t think I’ve forgotten about you, Tai Yang!” she said. “We’re going to have a long discussion about a couple of things in the morning.”

Tai shook his head. “Well, that was a thing,” he said dully. “Qrow, what should we do about the guys we captured alive?”

“No need to kill those clowns,” Qrow said. “They didn’t get a good look at either of us, and at least one has head trauma from that bat of yours.”

“Yeah,” Tai said. “Do you mind . . .”

“Just get the car,” the Vampire said. Tai nodded and walked off after the Valkyries.

Left alone with the fresh corpses, Qrow reached into his pocket and dug out his phone. Despite the commotion, it was perfectly intact. Thank God for LifeProof, the agnostic thought. Scrolling through the contacts, he chose a familiar number. “Oz? Sorry to bother you, but we got a problem. Yeah, it was about the boy. No, he’s safe, but we’re going to need a cleanup. Thanks Old Man.”

Chapter End Notes

So, how did everyone like Cole and Heather? I'm not sure how much I'll end up using them, but I enjoyed making them up (Even if Heather might have made me use more profanities in this one chapter than I may have in my entire life--wow, does she have a dirty mouth). For those of you against foster-incest . . . sorry? Then again, considering how many Harry Potter fics seem to want to make Harry get frisky with his Mom (discounting the ones whose writers think Ginny looking like Lily is a reason for Harry to get together with her. Yes, I'm a fan of ReixShinji, but her being a partial clone of his mother is something for them to overcome not a reason for him to fall for her), I'm not sure there's that many of you. Internet is a strange and disturbing land . . .

That scene with the Valyries and the Xaio-Long/Branwens was kind of inspired by a similar scene from BLOOD TIES. It ended pretty differently though.

For those of you paying attention, yes, Qrow's weapon is Sam's knife from the poster for Season 1 of Supernatural which for some odd reason only appeared briefly in the pilot of the actual series (I don't know why; it looks AWESOME). Let's face it, there's no way he can lug around a giant scythe/sword/gun hybrid weapon, even if such a thing were possible in this world. Those who were paying attention also noticed I dropped a hint about the dusty old crow's backstory. A backstory which will be important later on.

I also dropped a couple (literally 2) clues about Ozpin's identity. In this story, he's not just going to be Ozpin; he's a combination of Ozpin and three more characters from other series. It'll all become apparent later.

I haven't been paying much attention to Volume 4 yet, as I'm still nursing my wounds from Volume 3, but I did notice on the RWBY wiki that Qrow's Semblance is bad luck. Obviously, that isn't the case for this fic, but I think I may have found a new running joke for his character.
On a totally unrelated note that has nothing to do with Qrow or anyone else, can anyone point me to some free pictures of the Crocker family weapons box from episode 2x11 of HAVEN ("Business as Usual")? Specifically with the box open showing off Duke's father's varied and impressive collection of armaments. Again, this has NOTHING to do with ANYTHING, I just want to know for . . . reasons.
Blood Is Spilled, Part 2

Chapter Notes

ALERT! This chapter was posted with Chapter 6, as they were originally meant to be one chapter. If you just jumped to this chapter, go back to Chapter 6. Also, I've finally (more or less) figured out how to use Ao3's publishing functions. So, I went back and cleaned up the previous chapters and added pictures. Enjoy!

2nd ALERT! There will be lots of violence and moral gray-ity in this chapter as in the last one! You have been warned.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

In Mantle, at the same time as the previous chapter.

Winter cursed as she snuck through the trees. Damn Scav-idiots! This should have been a simple operation. They’d found the bloodsuckers’ nest, an abandoned barn on the edge of town, a relic from a previous age converted into a typical Vampire hideaway. The beasts almost always lived in squalor, as though they’d forgotten human needs for comfort and privacy. As long as it was hidden from humans, they seemed content to sleep like rabbits in a warren. Unfortunately, the Southern Coalition Against Vampires had also figured out the location, somehow. This mission was supposed to take place before the numbskulls could get together enough manpower and “resources” to stage a raid on the place. Apparently, they’d overestimated the group’s response time.

The Slayers, two dozen men and women, had parked their cars a half mile back and continued in on foot. They’d dusted their clothes with pollen from garlic blossoms to avoid being scented by the Vampires. Most carried machetes although a few carried hatchets and kukri, and Winter had her saber and an Arabian Janbiya dagger.
Most also carried crossbows whose hollow arrows had been filled with Dead Man’s Blood. Rather than the traditional models favored in the movies, these were custom-designed weapons holding two and in some cases three bows, allowing the user to fire multiple times without stopping to re-load. It was an innovation German hunters had developed early Nineteenth Century. Guns weren't effective against some beasts.

The Schnee daughter, however, preferred to trust in her blades over the bulky projectile launchers, although he had a revolver strapped to her hip just in case. They were also armed with an assortment of flashbangs, and one member even carried a S.W.A.T.-issue tear gas launcher as well as an unlit flame-thrower. They would use the tear gas to force the Vampires out into the open, where they would be first slowed with the blood-filled bolts, then decapititated with the blades. It would be much more dangerous than that, of course, but it was a simple plan that had served them well in the past. The night would end with the flame-thrower being used to eliminate the evidence.

The team had made it to the barn without incident, positioning themselves in a wide circle around the building. Before the tear gas could be launched, however, half a dozen pickups had charged in, their engines roaring, their high beams blazing. The nit-wits had used duct tape to draw crosses onto their headlights and had affixed gas-propelled, high-power stake-launchers and Ultraviolet flood-lights onto the backs of their trucks. The men had streamed out, bedecked in crosses and wreaths of garlic bulbs and carrying traditional crossbows along with roughly-carved wooden stakes and mallets. The
men on the backs of the trucks aimed their floodlights and fired their wooden missiles into the windows of the building, dispelling whatever doubt the bloodsuckers had as to why they were there.

As one, no less than ten Vampires leapt through the windows and doors, their fangs extended and their lips pulled back in a display of animalistic fury. Some of Vampires ran into the woods while others charged their foes head on. They targeted the Scavs, either realized that anyone who thought shining crosses at them was easy prey or else just angered by the bright light. In all fairness to the Scavs, they didn’t seem perturbed when the Vampires didn’t burst into flames under the UV light. They fired their arrows into the approaching horde, but because their weapons were silver-tipped rather than slathered or filled with rotten blood, the Vampires ignored them and continued the charge. The men with the stake launchers fared better, their projects were moving with enough force to knock the Vampires back. Of course, that wouldn’t stop the monsters from getting up again, soon.

The Slayers reacted with precision and discipline. When the Vampires were slowed by the stakes, they opened fire with their own arrows. The hollow bolts hit home, connecting with undead torsos, thighs, and shoulders. The Vampires moaned and staggered, falling over as the poisoned blood did its work on their mutated systems. The Slayers moved in for the kill. Unfortunately, the idiots once again beat them to it.

The Scavs charged in to hammer their wooden stakes into the bodies of the fallen Vampires. One particularly dense fellow who had clearly watched too many Joss Wheaton episodes didn’t even have a hammer; he tried to thrust the stake in like it was a knife. Regardless of technique, however, the results were the same. The Vampires grabbed their would-be killers and dragged them down to rip open their necks and wrists.

Winter had raced as fast as she could, drawing her long, curved sword, she severed the head of the nearest bloodsucker before it could bite into its victim. The others weren’t so lucky. Some of them managed to decapitate a few Vamps without issue, but the hapless Scavs’ lifeblood was counteracting the Dead Man’s Blood. The Vampires might not yet be at 100%, but they were strong enough to stand and fight or cut and run.

A couple did dash into the forest, but four or five more were engaging with the Slayers. Winter saw a few Scavs run into the forest after the Vampires. Taking a calculating glance at her comrades, she cursed and ran after the idiots. As annoying as it was, she couldn’t let the Vamps escape with potential recruits.

The elder Schnee daughter raced in the tracks of the Scavs. She spared a glance at the compass attached to her wristwatch and saw she was headed north. Hopefully, the Vamps had escaped. Hopefully, their enhanced athleticism and natural stealth had allowed the monsters to disappear into the trees without a trace. Hopefully, the idiot Scavs were blundering around in the dark lost, and she could just lead them back to the fight to help clean up the mess.

Winter raced forward. In front of her, a Vampire lifted its head from a man’s bleeding neck. The beast hissed at her, fangs barred, lips bloody, eyes shining. It threw its victim down like a sack of trash and charged at her. Winter slashed with her saber, but the Vampire dodged. She tried to slash again, but this time the Vampire caught her arm, twisting her wrist. Winter heard a “pop” and the blade fell from her hand. She ground her teeth to avoid screaming as the Vampire used her injured arm to spin her around. It grabbed her other shoulder. She felt its cold breath on her neck . . .

“AAAAAHHHHHH!”
The Vampire screamed in pain, its grip weakening. Winter wrenched herself free, drawing her Janbiya from the beast’s thigh, its blade dripping a combination of blood from both the dead and the undead. Spinning around, she used her momentum to build up strength. With one neat stroke she separated the monster’s head from its body.

Winter struggled to keep herself upright, panting as her body began crashing as the adrenaline surge wore off. She stumbled over to the man on the ground, examining his body. Dead. Gripping a tree branch, she hauled herself up again. There was no need to worry about the corpse becoming another Vampire. Vampires didn’t feed off people they’d infected, and this man’s comrades might still be alive.

Winter transferred her dagger to her weakened hand. Gritting her teeth, she used some bandages to wrap it in place. Satisfied the blade was secure, she continued on. She returned the saber to its scabbard; it wasn’t particularly useful right now.

Winter pushed on. She couldn’t hear the sounds of the battle behind her anymore. Good. That meant they’d won. Guilt stung her heart like a bee, but she pushed it down. She couldn’t let the last Vampire get away or let it snack on the—

“NO-O-O-O!” a voice cried. It was a human voice, the personification of fear, despair, and anguish like she’d never heard before. Winter raced forward. Her legs burned, her shoulders felt heavy as lead, but she still ran. Before her, in a clearing was a sight from any hunter’s nightmares...

One of the men lay on ground, shuddering, as though he was about to start crying. The other was held in place by the Vampire. Although a tall, well-built man, he was no match for the monster’s inhuman strength. In the moonlight, she could see blood on both their mouths.

The plague-ridden beast had infected them.

The monster lowered its bloody wrist from its victim’s mouth. This man wasn’t shaking as the other one was, he was still struggling, still trying to escape. Despite herself, Winter felt her respect for the Scav rise. Reaching into her belt, she pulled out her gun. A simple black revolver, .357 caliber. “Let him go,” she said.

“You people . . .” the Vampire said. It wasn’t like the other one. Its fangs drawn back, it looked like a young attractive man. Dressed in torn jeans and a black leather jacket, with hair down to the shoulders, it looked like any wannabe post-teenage rebel. Winter wasn’t fooled by the disguise though, not in the slightest.

“You people . . .” the Vampire spat. “Or what, you’ll shoot me? You know that won’t work,” the Vampire spat. “Even if it could, you wouldn’t shoot this poor sap would you?” Winter voiced nothing, but her face must have, because the Vampire nodded. “I thought so. You won’t risk a human life. You people . . . Why can’t you just leave us alone? We have as much right to live as you do!”

“No . . . you don’t,” the captured man said. He jabbed his elbow into the Vampire’s gut as hard as he could. Winter didn’t know whether or not Vampires needed oxygen to survive, but they certainly didn’t enjoy getting all the air forced from their diaphragm. The Vampire bent forward and the captured man tried to break away. The Vampire caught his arm, but it was too late.

“BANG!” Winter’s gun fired. A bullet drilled into the Vampire’s forehead, leaving a bloody-hole. The monster staggered, and the man broke free, falling to the ground and rolling away. The Vampire was disoriented, but it wasn’t dead. Extending its fangs, it took a wobbly step forward.
“BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!”

Winter emptied the remaining chambers into the Vampire’s face, walking forward as she did so. The beast fell to the ground, spasming as its ruined brain tried desperately to cling to life. Dropping the gun, Winter wrapped her functional hand around the one wrapped around her Janbiya.

“Aaauuuugggghhhh!” With a primal roar so at odds with her normal persona, Winter swung the blade with all her might, severing the Vampire’s head and drawing a gash in the ground beneath its neck. Already on her knees, Winter flopped over, panting heavily now.

“Wow,” a shaky voice said. Winter looked over and saw it was the other Scav, the one who’d been infected first.

“Not bad,” said the other, sitting up. He’d drawn something from his pocket, a wallet. “Can I ask your name, lady?” he asked.

“... Winter,” she said.

The man nodded. “That wouldn’t happen to be Winter Schnee would it?” he asked. “My son goes to school with your sister. Small world,” he said.

“Is your son a part of your group?” Winter asked.

“Unfortunately,” the man said. “Ever since his mother was... taken from us—by the vamps—all I saw was evil. I took what I’d learned in the Marines, and I taught it to him. Didn’t do much for our relationship, of course. Six-years-old and the boy’s mother is gone, and his father’s become a drill sergeant. Then a man came and told us what had taken my wife and offered us the chance for revenge, I accepted for both of us. I had to. We were damaged goods. Unfit for anything else.” The man shook his head. “Sometimes I wonder if he might have recovered if someone else had been his father.”

“That’s why you joined them, isn’t it?” Winter asked. “Vampires.” He nodded. She tried not to wonder if it had really been a Vampire that had killed his wife. There was a fifty-fifty shot it had been a human or disease that had taken her, and the Coalition had merely fed a traumatized man their half-truths. But now wasn’t the time for such questions.

“Think you could teach him how to fight? My son. I don’t know who you guys are, but you did a better job than any of us did. He needs to get stronger.”

Winter thought for a moment before replying. “Yes. I will. I could teach you, too.”

The man laughed. “There’s no teaching me. Look at my mouth. Fanged bastard infected me. This is the end for me. Him too,” the man gestured to his companion.

“Wa-wait, Gordon,” the man said. “This doesn’t...it doesn’t...we might not turn!”

“We will,” the now identified Gordon said. “I just wish I was strong enough to put you down before you finished. But I don’t have that kind of strength anymore... I keep remembering... Doesn’t matter. I’m too tired.”

“Gordon!” Winter said. “Wait!”

“I’ve waited too long already,” the man said, drawing a small pistol and pressing it under his chin.

“Gordon!” Winter cried.
“Gordon Winchester,” the man said. He tossed his wallet over to Winter. “That’s my name. My son is Cardin Winchester,” he said. “Tell him I’m sorry, but he has to get strong now. He has to.”

“No! Listen to me Gord—”

"BANG!"

Gordon Winchester’s body slumped over, the top of his head had a crater like a meteor had struck it. The rock he’d sat against painted red with his blood.

“Damn you!” Winter hissed, looking down at the wallet. Picking it up, she saw a faded photo of a younger Gordon with a woman and a young boy with red hair. Poor boy. No one should have to go through that.

“Ma’am!” a girl’s voice barked. Winter looked up and saw a young woman, barely more than a girl really, leading a team of Slayers. African American with short hair, stopping she fell into a ready stance. Solieil, as she recalled Ciel Solieil. “What’s the situation?” she asked.

“I tracked and killed the two fleeing Vampires,” Winter explained. “But this one had already infected these two.”

“Infected?” the girl asked, turning to still-living Scav. He wasn’t shuddering, anymore. Instead, he was staring frozen at Gordon’s corpse. Winter couldn’t blame him, despite how green he seemed. It was hard to see a friend go in such a bloody way.

“He needs silver, now!” Winter barked. She padded around her vest and withdrew a, mercifully intact, bottle of colloidal silver. “Here!” she said, tossing it to the girl.

Solieil caught it and moved to the man. “Drink this,” she ordered.

“What?” the man asked.

“It’s the cure for Vampirism!” Winter cried.

“But, I thought there was no cure,” the man whispered.

“Not if you complete the transformation. Now drink!” Winter ordered.

The man nodded and took a swig of the bottle. He coughed at the taste before taking another one.

“We should warn you,” Solieil said. “That even when taken immediately, there is still a chance the silver will fail to halt the transformation. Should that occur . . .”

“At least I have a chance, right?” the man said, weakly.

“More than a chance,” Winter said. She looked over to the dead Gordon Winchester. “That’s what I was trying to tell him.” She gripped the wallet in her hands. “The Damn fool.”

The scene that met Winter as she led the Slayers and the living Scav back out of the forest was not as bad as it could have been. It wasn’t pleasant though. The Vampires were all dead; that was good, but she saw at least three dead Slayers and at least as many Scavs on the ground. Combined with Gordon Winchester and the unnamed man she’d encountered earlier, that was eight dead people. More counting the corpses in the barn; usually Vamps fed on their victims over a period of days or even weeks. These hadn’t been so patient.
The living weren’t all in good repair. Winter cringed at the sight of the flamer-thrower operator. The poor man had apparently been attacked by three Vampires and once and had tried to use his tool as a weapon to fend them off. It seemed to have worked minimally well, but he was still being wrapped up like an Egyptian mummy by his comrades. Fire, like stakes, garlic, and sunlight, did not kill Vampires. Only beheading could do that.

“Who in Blazes are you people?” a voice shouted. Winter turned. A man about Ironwood’s age was marching towards her. It might have been intimidating if not for the jangling silver crosses and the wreath of garlic dangling about his neck. “What happened to my men?”

“Dead,” Winter spat. “The Vamps killed one. The other killed himself when he was infected.”

“Good man,” the leader said, coldly.

“But, he didn’t have to!” the survivor cried. Pointing to Winter, he continued, “she had the cure!”

“Foolish girl,” the man said. “There is no cure. And I suppose she gave it to you too?” he asked his subordinate. Shaking his head, he reached into his coat. “I’m sorry, but there is no other choice. It’s a shame you lacked Gordon’s strength, but—”

Wham!

The man’s mistake had been taking his eyes off Winter. As soon as he began to raise the gun at his man, Winter had grabbed his wrist in her good hand and swung her elbow into his face. The man stumbled, the gun slipping from his hand. Winter punched him in the face, knocking him on his back. “He didn’t have to die!” she shouted. Ignoring his groaning, Winter straddled his torso and began hammering away at his face. “He didn’t have to die! He didn’t have to die! He. Didn’t. Have. To. Die!”

Some of the Scavs tried to assist their boss, but the Slayers restrained them. Others were just too shocked to do anything. After a moment, Winter sat back, panting. Looking down at the bruised face beneath her in disgust, she stood up. Walking around the man, she spoke. “You’re friends died tonight because they had no idea what they were doing! What they were facing!” She scanned the faces of the men who’d followed the fool’s command. “Real Vampires are nothing like the movies! You thought wooden stakes and sun lamps would kill them. Instead, it got your friends killed. And mine, who died trying to protect you!” Taking a deep breath, Winter forced herself to calm down. “We are the Society of Slayers! We are the professionals. We deal with this. Go back home to your families and get back to your lives.”

Turning back, she addressed Ciel. “Take some men and retrieve the cars. I want to leave as soon as possible. The rest of you, if you can, pile the bodies into the barn and douse them. Then torch it all.” The girl saluted and began barking instructions. Winter nodded. It was tragic that a girl so young should be caught up in all this darkness, but there was no denying that James had chosen well with her.

As the men and women still able to do so, began to carry out her instructions. Winter heard footsteps behind her. It was the man she’d cured. “Um,” he said. “Can I join your team?”

Chapter End Notes

Yes, SUPERNATURAL fans, Gordon Winchester, is a hybridization of Gordon
Walker and John Winchester. I originally thought about making him Black like Gordon, but then remembered S.C.A.V. was the KKK for Vampires and thought it was better to make them all white. Also notice they're all men, whereas the Slayers are men and women of multiple ethnicities. Now I actually feel sorry for Cardin; I didn't know that was possible. On the upside, Hey! now I have a way to use him in the story! I didn't before!

Also, yes, the last Vampire is based on Luther from SUPERNATURAL. I like that exchange he has with the Winchesters because it seems like the first time the show began to experiment with the idea that maybe the Hunters weren't unquestionably in the right (an idea which future seasons would develop before dropping on its head whenever the plot wanted to go dark. Seriously, show. Make up your mind!)

Slayers v. Specialists? Remember, "Specialists" is a term Creatures use. Obviously, they haven't been chatting with the hunters themselves. Both communities use the nickname "Scav" because of the Coalition's initials. Also, "Slayers" only refers to this particular group of Specialists.

Colloidal Silver is a real substance used in alternative medicine. At present the United States government is vetting it for public use, but silver has been used medicinally for millennia. For me, this was just a fun way to insert the mythological vulnerability of Vampires to silver while still keeping in theme with the rest of the (for now) more sci-fi style of paranormal happenings.

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR THE NEXT CHAPTER OR TWO! DO NOT SKIP!: The next chapter or two should feature the first fan-submitted OC. Special thanks to RedLikeRuby for the suggestion and permission to use their character. If anyone else wants to submit an OC . . . I can't promise to use them, but I'll try. Also, the next chapter will be another one where this fic earns the "Mature" label, albeit in a very different way. Be warned! Here There Be Lemon-Flavored Dragons.
Recouperation

Chapter Notes

Hey-O! I know I said it would be a while before I posted a new chapter (and I honestly expected it to take much longer), but this wouldn't leave me alone, so here we are. I'm sorry. Really, I am. Also, I went back and fixed the last couple chapters because they had some glaringly bad mistakes.

Anyway, thanks again to RedLikeRuby for letting me use their OC, Dearg, and giving me the outline of her race. And thanks also to Ashliel for making me realize Banshees and Sirens could be the same race.

WARNING: This chapter has graphic, explicit depictions of consensual sex between two persons. If this bothers you, then just skip the Lemon. Go to the last couple lines of the chapter, and you'll get what's important.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“So Ren is Nora’s—” Weiss started.

“Parents’ adopted son,” Ruby explained.

“That makes them sibling!” Weiss said.

“No, it doesn’t!” Ruby said. “I mean—they've had a crush on each other since they first met. They’re totally perfect for each other.”

“And they’re parents are . . . all right with this?” Weiss asked.

Ruby shrugged. “Creature stuff.”

Weiss frowned. “How . . . Just, how did that happen?”

Ruby frowned. “Well, Ren’s parents died when he was young. I think it was in a car crash, but it was a long time ago. I think he was five or six; it was before we were friends.”

Weiss cut her off. “And then Nora’s parents adopted him,” she said, gently (for her). She was actually growing to like Ruby’s ramblings, but right now she had questions that needed answers. “Does the Creature community have a means of arranging Creature orphans to be adopted by Creature or Enlightened families?”

“Ah, no,” Ruby said. “At least not back then. Nora’s parents didn’t have a clue about any of this when they brought him home.”

“Yeah, but that didn’t last long,” Yang said. She and Blake entered the room then. “Kind of hard to stay ignorant when your new kid is the only one to who wants liver and onions.”

Blake swatted the blonde’s arm. “The problem was they didn’t know what to feed him,” she said. “Ren had been taught by his parents to keep his hunger and abilities a secret, but his health started deteriorating. They probably would’ve called in a doctor—an ignorant, un-Enlightened, human
doctor—if it hadn’t been for Qrow and Taiyang.”

Weiss looked at her friends. “Please don’t tell me they tried to kidnap Ren.”

Yang smiled. “OK. We won’t tell you.”

“But that’s totally what they did,” Ruby said, grinning.

Weiss shook her head. “Ruby, should I be concerned about the number of felonies your guardians and role models have accumulated?”

The Rose/Xaio Long girls shrugged. “You get used to it,” Yang said. “Anyway, they tried to sneak into the house to grab Ren—”

“Which they totally could’ve done by way,” Ruby said, “because Vampires can be super-ninja-stealthy when we want to.”

“Ruby, your father is human, remember?” Weiss asked.

“Which is how they got caught,” Blake said.

“Dad knocked over a lamp,” Yang snorted. “Suddenly, Uncle Qrow’s fighting off a giant with a jumbo knife and an Amazon with a baton. In their P.J.’s. Dad managed to get into the Ren’s room, but Nora was sleeping with him.” Yang paused as her brain caught up to her mouth. “Whoa. I did not mean to make that pun. I mean she shared a bed with him—oh my gosh . . .”

“Nora likes to use Ren as a teddy bear,” Blake deadpanned. “For as long as any of us have known them, their favorite sleeping positions have been beside each other.”

“Wait, didn’t Yang and Ren date for a time?” Weiss asked.

“They weren’t ‘together-together’ then,” Yang explained. “ Took us all a while to figure out their feelings for each other weren’t exactly sibling-like. Anyway, Dad goes into their room and grabs Ren—”

“And Nora went ballistic on him,” Ruby snickered. “‘She was like a little, pink whirlwind—that BIT me!’”

Things got bad enough that Ren actually transformed,” Blake said. “Gumiho are akin to Weres. We have similar . . . appearances.”

“And by that, you mean fangs, claws, and glowing eyes?” Weiss asked, arms crossed.

“Actually, Gumiho eyes don’t glow,” Blake said, not at all repentant.

“But yeah, he totally looked like a monster,” Yang said. The others looked at her. “What? I’m just saying he would’ve looked really scary the first time.”

“Ren had been raised to keep his abilities a secret,” Blake explained. “It’s an essential lesson young Creatures have to learn. I don’t know if he was even aware of his diet at the time.”

“So Uncle Qrow’s fighting both of their parents at once, and he’s going he-yah! He-yah! He-yah!” Ruby said, chopping the air with her arms. Weiss tried to look disapproving, but could barely contain a smile. How could this girl make something so . . . doltish look so cute?

“Yeah, except he’s trying to keep the Vampire stuff a secret, so he can’t go all out,” Yang said “but
then Dad comes in with a girl chomping on his leg, carrying a snarling boy with fangs and claws, and the fox is out of the bag.”

“Fox?” Weiss asked.

“Gumiho in folklore can turn into foxes,” Blake explained.

“That’s when they decided to calm down long enough to listen to Dad and Uncle Qrow,” Yang explained. “They call Pyrrha’s parents—”

“Who are lawyers and were trying to get Ren put in someone else’s custody legally,” Blake explained. “Or at least mostly-legally.”

“And they come by and give them the ‘Creatures of myth and legend are real but need to be kept a secret’ speech, and now we’re all friends.” Yang finished.

“I thought it was the responsibility of the Creature who exposed themselves to explain the situation,” Weiss said.

“I also said the rules could be bent if the responsible parties couldn’t be trusted to do a good job,” Blake said. “Mr. and Mrs. Valkyrie apparently needed a lot of proof be convinced.”

“How did they take it?” Weiss asked.

“Mrs. Valkyrie put her foot down and told them they were keeping Ren,” Ruby said.

“I think she actually threatened to shoot them if they tried to take him,” Yang said.

“Somehow that doesn’t surprise me,” Weiss said. “So, how is Ren doing?”

“Better than he was yesterday,” Blake replied.

“I made him some soup and a sandwich with fresh liver,” Yang said casually, ignoring the way Weiss flinched. “That should help him recover.”

“What is he going to do about exams?” Weiss asked. “For that matter, what are the Valkyries going to tell the school?”

“Eh, let’s leave that to them,” Ruby said. Cocking her head, the Vampire added, “Hey, there’s a car pulling up.”

“Your Dad and uncle?” Weiss asked.

“No, it’s the wrong model,” Blake said, her eyes closed as she listened. She had explained to Weiss earlier that while her own senses rivaled Ruby’s they weren’t active all the time, a quirk of Were nature.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

“Open up! Open up, you pack of hobgoblins!” a woman called on the other side, hitting the door with her fist.

“Hobgoblins?” Weiss asked.

“Dearg!” Ruby shouted, bolting for the door. Throwing it open, she revealed a tall, young woman with hair as red as Pyrrha’s.
“Ah! Ruby! Calm down before you break me in two!” Despite her cries, she wrapped her arms around the shorter girl.

“I’m sorry! When did you get back! We missed you last night!”

“I’ll bet you did!” the newcomer said, laughing.

“Who’s she?” Weiss asked, a little harder than intended.

“Dearg’s an old friend,” Blake explained.

“Are you jealous, Ice Princess?” Yang asked.

As Weiss stuttered out a denial, Ruby led the newcomer in. Up close, Weiss could see her hair fell to her waist. She wore jeans and a sleeveless shirt as red as her hair. And her eyes. Bright, red eyes.

“Hello,” she said. “I don’t recall seeing you before, Dearg Pléimionn, at your service,” she said, extending her hand.

“Weiss Schnee,” the heiress replied. She shook hands with the taller girl.

“A Schnee, here of all places?” the girl asked.

Weiss frowned. “I’m sorry,” she said, not sounding so, “but who are you exactly and where are you from?”

“I’m a friend of the family,” Dearg said.

“A Creature?” Weiss asked.

Dearg smiled. “You better believe it, Princess. Though you shouldn’t’ve asked me that question. As for where I’m from, I just got back from a trip to Ireland. Visiting the family in the old country and all that.”

“Don’t call me Princess,” Weiss said. “I guess you’re not a Leprechaun.”

The girl laughed, a musical sound that seemed to fill the room and made Weiss feel warm and woozy. Ruby raced over and steadied her.

“Dearg!” Blake shouted.

“Sorry all,” said the taller girl. “Lost control for a moment there.” As Weiss recovered her senses, she noticed the others weren’t doing much better. Blake had her hands over her ears, and Yang and Ruby were shaking their heads. “No, Miss Schnee. I’m no Leprechaun, assuming they even exist; I’m a Ban Side.

“A Banshee?” Weiss asked.

"Indeed, little girl-child,” the girl said in a thick accent. She winked at Weiss, then dropped the accent as she continued. “Siren, if you want the Greek name. Either way, I can do things with my voice you can only dream of.”

“That’s nice,” Weiss replied, not sounding terribly pleased. She found herself wanting this woman to go somewhere else.

“Weiss can sing!” Ruby—the traitor—said. “She’s in the school choir, and she’s really good! Maybe you two could sing together sometime!”
“Maybe if Miss Schnee’s interested,” Dearg said.

“Maybe.” Weiss’ reply implied that she wouldn’t be. “I don’t recall having seen you at school, Dearg. Can I ask how you knew Ren and the others?”

“I suspect you wouldn’t,” Dearg said. The Banshee seemed to have worked out that her presence had upset the white-haired girl and had countered with similar false-sweetness. “I didn’t go to Beacon High. I’m a graduate of Haven Academy.”

“The magnet school?” Weiss asked. Haven was regarded as one of the best schools in the county for the arts.

“You'd better believe it,” Dearg said. “I’m a Thespian, a stage performer, and occasionally a stage hand. I graduated last year. I just completed my first year at Vale Community before my family shipped off to Emerald Isle.”

“You’re in college?” Weiss asked.

“I’ve got a year on most of this lot, aside from the baby Vampire, that is,” she smiled at the girl, and Weiss tried to swallow a frown. “As for how I met ‘em, it was just Creature Community get-togethers. You’ll probably be invited to them now that you’re a part of it.” She shrugged. “Anyway, is Ren ready to receive visitors? I heard he was pretty banged up and wanted to make sure he was all right. Ban she couldn’t make it, but sends her love.”

“He’s eating now,” Yang said. “Pyrrha, Jaune and Nora are with him. Sun and Neptune are asleep on the couch,” she pointed over her shoulder.

“I’ll say hi to them later,” the Banshee promised. “For now, I’d like to see Ren. And Pyrrha, if she’ll have me.”

“I’m sure she’ll be happy to see you,” Blake said, loudly to be heard over Yang’s snorts. The Were elbowed the blonde in the side, but it did little to stop her mate’s mirth. “I’ll take you to them.”

“Thanks, Blake,” Dearg said. “See you later, all.”

“Good seeing you, Dearg,” Ruby replied. She was blushing and had been since Yang began cracking up.

“All right, what’s so funny?” Weiss asked. “And why are you blushing, Ruby?”

“I wish I could tell you, Ice Queen,” Yang said, grinning, “but Blake would banish me to the couch if I did.”

“It’s just a stupid pun,” Ruby muttered.

“F-No! Rubes, it’s a great pun!” Yang said.

“I am so sick of all these secrets,” Weiss said.

“Hey, it’s not our fault if you can’t figure out the obvious,” Yang said. “You have all the information you need to work it out.”

“Pyrrha will explain it,” Ruby said. “Eventually. Just . . . remember we’re different from you, OK?”

Weiss cocked her head. Did she mean . . . ? No. No way.
“How’s the soup?” Pyrrha asked. She and Jaune were sitting next to the bed their friend was recovering in. Nora sat next to him, careful to keep her weight off him while he was recovering. Ren sat in the middle of the bed, propped up on pillows with a tray in his lap, with milk, grilled cheese, and tomato soup.

“Good,” the injured Creature answered.

Nora snorted. “Yang made it, of course it’s good.”

“I’ve heard that before,” a voice said.

The assembled four looked up. “Dearg,” Pyrrha said.

“Hey! You’re home!” Nora said. “How was Ireland?”

“Lovely as always,” the Banshee replied. “I heard what happened.” Approaching the bed, she looked over Ren. “How are ya doing, Ren?”

The Gumiho shrugged. “I’ve been better.”

“His lunch is fortified with Vitamin L,” Jaune said. Ren, Nora, and Dearg looked at him askance. Pyrrha actually giggled.

“In other words, Yang put liver in his food,” Dearg said. “Soup or sandwich?”

“Both,” Nora said, smiling. “To make sure he gets better as soon as possible.”

“Nora wanted to spoon-feed him,” Jaune said. “Took an hour to talk her out of it.”

“Mm-hm,” Dearg said, looking him up and down. He had deep circles under his eyes. Eyes that looked like they were having trouble staying open. “Your lunch looks a little light on sugar and vitamins. Want me to grab some fruit from the kitchen, Ren? Maybe another glass of milk?”

Ren blinked. “Sure,” he said. “Thank you.”

“I’ll get it!” Nora said.

“NO!” Dearg said. “It’ll just bother Ren if you move around a lot. I’ll get it. In fact, Pyrrha why don’t you come with me. We’ll bring back snacks for everyone.”

“I could go—”Jaune started.

“Nah, three is too many,” Dearg said. “You stay here an keep Ren and Nora company.”

“There’s some donut holes in the pantry!” Nora said.

“You mean you didn’t eat them all at once?” Dearg asked. “You might learn some self-restraint yet, Nora!” She and Pyrrha walked out and into the kitchen. Pyrrha went to the pantry.

Whereupon Dearg grabbed her and spun the other redhead around. Her smile was gone now. She was glaring at her.
“You stupid child!” she hissed.

“Dearg—” Pyrrha stared.

“No. You listen to me. When was the last time you fed on someone other than Jaune?”

“I—”

“WHEN?”

Pyrrha dropped her eyes and answered. “I fed on Ban... a week ago...”

“A week... A week?” Dearg asked, unable to believe what she was hearing. “You... what were you thinking?”

“Well what was I supposed to do?” Pyrrha asked. “Ren was missing. Nora was almost comatose with the loss. You were across the ocean...”

“Ban would’ve helped you again,” Dearg said. “So would Sun and Neptune if you would’ve asked them to. Feck, Yang and Blake might’ve agreed to it if only to help you out. Why didn’t you ask them? You have a biological need—”

“Screw my biology!” Pyrrha said. “I never asked to be this way!”

“No, you didn’t,” the Banshee said. “Neither did Jaune, but he’s more accepting of what you are than you are yourself.”

“He shouldn’t have to be,” Pyrrha whispered.

“You stupid child,” Dearg said again. This time it was a harsh whisper. “Do you know how lucky you are? To have a mate, a human no less, who accepts this? Who embraces it? Look at your parents; they sleep around more than old-school James Bond. Do they love each other any less for it?”

“No, but...” Pyrrha shuffled. “I’m not like them. I don’t know why—they grew up watching Disney and stuff and hearing their teachers and classmates talk about finding your ’one and only’ just like me—but I am. Why?”

Dearg shook her head. “I’m sorry, Pyrrha. I can’t answer that. Beyond saying the Good Lord made us all special, crazy snowflakes. I can’t tell you why your or my or any of our kinds exist anymore than I can tell you why Autism or Turret’s or Savants exist. What I can say is that you’re killing Jaune.”

“I tried... I tried to space my feedings out,” Pyrrha whispered.

“Which only made it worse,” Dearg said. “Pyrrha... I don’t get you. I really don’t. Your aunts are all porn starts and escorts. And they’re lucky! Most of your kind end up as street walkers and strippers! Yet, you have... all these people who care so much about you. Jaune, Ren, Nora, me, Ban, Sun, Neptune, Yang, Blake—Feck, I think Ruby and the heiress would help you out if you asked nicely.”


“And you have a life expectancy of two or three centuries!” Dearg shot back. “And you’ll be better looking near the end than I will.” She paused, thinking. “That’s why the heiress is here, isn’t she?
She and Ruby are a thing now?"

“Maybe,” Pyrrha said. “They haven’t gone out yet, but they’re open, positively open, to the idea.”

“Ruby’s a Vampire; she’d better be,” Dearg muttered. “Pyrrha . . . we’ve gotten off subject. When was the last time you fed—off Jaune or anyone?”

Pyrrha looked down. “A couple of days ago.”

“Which means you’re due for another tonight,” Dearg said. “Jaune’s off the menu, and I don’t think Ren is up for it, either.”

“I can’t ask Nora, not right now,” Pyrrha protested.

“Feck yes, you can,” the Banshee corrected her. “She might say no, but she won’t take offense to asking. And if she does turn you down, you can ask me and Ban for some help.” Seeing the fight had gone out of the other redhead’s eyes, she let the matter go. “Now come on,” she said, “let’s get the others their snacks.”

She and Pyrrha returned with Nora’s beloved donut bites, along apples—golden delicious—and peaches for Ren and the others. Dearg resisted the urge to make a culturally-insensitive joke about immortality. They also had a glass of milk for Ren and sodas for everyone else.

The friends were snacking merrily for a few minutes, listening to Dearg discuss her travels when Nora leaned over to Pyrrha and (sort of) whispered, “I’m happy to help you out tonight, Pyrrha.”

Blushing, the redhead ducked her head and mumbled a thank you. Jaune took pity on his girlfriend/mate and put an arm around her.

“Don’t worry, Winter,” Weiss said, praying her sister wouldn’t decide to switch from calling her to Facetime. “I’m perfectly safe.

“If you insist,” Winter said. “I’ll pick you up after school tomorrow, and we’ll go out to dinner. Maybe I can get our reservations again.”

“You realize I get out at noon tomorrow?” Weiss asked. “My schedule’s changed for exam week. Are you all right, Winter?”

“I am perfectly fine,” Winter snapped. “I’ve merely . . . Some unpleasantness happened while I was in Mantel. It made me think of you.” An uncomfortable silence followed; Weiss imagined her sister shuffling her feet like she did when she was at a loss. “On second thought, I won’t be able to pick you up, Weiss. I won’t get back until at least two. I’ll send a cab.”

“I could just ask one of my friends to take me home,” Weiss said. Silence returned as the women processed the odd statement. Prior to Pyrrha’s shuttling Weiss from Ruby’s house to hers, had Weiss ever been driven around by her friends?

“Yes, well, I wouldn’t want to impose on them,” Winter said. “Still, I’ll trust you to decide what to do. Study well, and I’ll see you tomorrow. Good night, Weiss.”

“Good night,” Weiss said, and the two hung up. She wondered what had her sister so concerned.
Normally, Winter came in two “modes:” there was the over-protective exploding bomb she had encountered on Saturday—That was what, two days ago? How much had her life changed in the course of three days—when she’d failed to show up the night before, and then the was the calm, collected business woman she sought to emulate. But, in that phone call, Winter had been neither woman. She’d been concerned, yes, but without the anger and with a sense of urgency. Weiss had been too confused feel guilty about not telling her sister she and the “study party” had changed locations from Pyrrha’s home to Nora’s.

Honestly, Winter’s concern had reminded her of Ruby. Not exactly a comparison the heiress wanted to make, given how the Vampiress made her feel. Still . . .

Weiss walked back into the living room from the hall she’d ducked into the take Winter’s call. In the Valkyrie's living room, her assembled friends were studying again. Or at least trying to. It was hard when a recently rescued friend was recovering from being imprisoned (and possibly more) by a team of well-trained genocidal maniacs.

In her opinion, it didn’t help that Mrs. Valkyrie was sitting at the table, cleaning the family’s entire firearms collection. Weiss didn’t know much about weapon laws, but she was fairly certain that it was illegal to own some of those items, even for an ex-soldier and an police-officer-turned-private-detective. Shotguns, machine guns, over-sized monstrosities that were probably sniper rifles, far too many handguns to count, and a collection of very large knives. Plus a modest supply of tasers and batons. Surely, the sheer number of killing and/or maiming utensils should have violated some law.

Weiss wasn’t a fool; she could see that this was for her benefit. The woman at the table was staring at her as she cleaned the weapons, and every time she finished one, she just happened to point it in Weiss’ direction as she examined it. After looking up to see a gun pointed at her for the fourth or fifth time, it had lost its impact. Now, the heiress was getting a little annoyed.

“Why does she hate me so much?” Weiss whispered as she sat back down on the couch next to Ruby.

The Vampire shrugged. “She just doesn’t know you.”

“I’m aware of that, but this seems excessive even for a stranger.”

“She used to be a cop,” Yang muttered. “She assumes you’re guilty until proven innocent.”

“That violates American legal principles,” Weiss said.

“That’s what cop shows have taught me,” the blonde countered.

“And we know how accurate television is,” Blake muttered. “Look at what it did to Vampires.”

“It’s probably because your—oof!”

Weiss looked up. Sun was rubbing his side, where Neptune had evidently elbowed him rather hard.

"My what?” The heiress asked, sharply.

"Your family," said Sun, looking annoyed at his boyfriend. "The police aren't very fond of your father.”

Weiss huffed. She was well aware that a number of charges that had been filed against her father over the years. Accusations of civil rights’ violations, embezzling, fraud, violations of safety standards in products and working conditions, and accusations of cover-ups accompanied every
single one. Fredrick Schnee himself and the company as a whole had never been found guilty of anything in a court of law, just some low to mid-level manager or someone outside the company, assuming the case wasn’t discredited all together. Not that there wasn’t bad press to be dealt with, publicity messes their father left for Winter to clean up while he quietly directed the legal department in making the problems in court go away. Winter told her that these messes weren’t his fault. Their father had always acted in the company’s best interests, she’d insisted, and always within the law. Weiss wasn’t entirely sure. Even if he was innocent of everything else, she was certain the accusations of cover-ups were mostly true, if only because there were so many. Which meant that if her father wasn’t actively involved in the other crimes (and the astonishing regularity of those crimes suggested he was), he was at least aware of them.

“You’re not your father, Weiss,” Ruby whispered, taking her hand. Weiss looked up at the girl. “She’ll see that soon enough.”

“Just don’t try to sneak up on her before that,” Yang said. “Or after, come to think of it.”

“Good to see you still remember the paper bag incident,” Dearg said, as she came back into the room, carrying a tray of sandwiches, drinks, fruit, and cookies. “Do you, Sun?”

“Kind of hard to forget,” Yang mumbled.

Simultaneously, Sun whined, “A guy makes one lousy mistake . . .”

Neptune snorted. “One? I love you, Sun, but you have made more than one mistake.”

“Yeah, but I like to think the lousy ones are few and far between.”

“You can ask, Weiss,” Blake said. “I know you’re curious.”

“I’d hate to ask what Sun considers a ‘lousy’ mistake,” Weiss grumbled, “but I am curious about this ‘paper bag incident’ you’re all discussing.

“I dared Sun to sneak up on Mrs. Valkyrie with a blown up paper bag and pop it behind her back,” Yang said. “She didn’t think it was very funny.” The blonde’s expression suggested she thought it was. Before Weiss or anyone could comment on the sheer stupidity of that dare, they were reminded of the presence of the woman herself.

Clack-Clack!

“I don’t hear studying in there!” Mrs. Valkyrie shouted, holding a freshly-polished shotgun.

“What is the Law of Identity?” Ruby shouted, picking her math book up again. The group got back to studying; Weiss reluctantly picked up one of the sandwiches Dearg had made. The redhead college student was lounging in the doorway, smug expression on her face. The sandwich had been made with thick slices of honey-glazed ham, the kind the Schnee daughters ate at home. Weiss’ favorite lunch meat, in fact.

The heiress was really starting to hate that stupid Banshee.

Pyrrha leaned down and kissed Jaune gently. “Good night, Jaune,” she said.
Jaune smiled. Once, he had been annoyed, and disturbed, by Pyrrha’s almost maternal actions, but over time, he’d come to understand why she did this: to assure him how much she loved him. And to remind herself that she wasn’t going behind his back. “Good night, Pyrrha. I love you.”

“I love you too,” she said. Then she rose from his side and crept out of the room. Dressed in a t-shirt and bike shorts, she had the freedom of movement to sneak over them. She hoped none of the others were awoken by her actions. It was unlikely, given their races. They were much too polite to ask her about it, though. Aside from Weiss, her friends all knew about her nature and its demands on her body. But they also knew her personality, and how any comments about it would have bothered her. So, they kept their eyes shut and let her sneak out. It was an old game amongst their crowd.

Pyrrha crept into Nora and Ren’s room. The carrot-haired girl was sitting in bed wearing a bright pink night gown. She was reading, of all things, her history text book.

Who’d have thought she’d be the one to remember they had exams coming up?

“Hey, Pyrrha,” she chirped, quieter than usual, in deference to the people in the living room. She closed the book and set it down beside the bed.

“Nora,” Pyrrha said. “Ren, why are you still awake? You need your rest.”

“He wanted to watch,” Nora said.

“Nora, I think after what he went through—” Pyrrha started to say, but was interrupted by the Creature in question.

“After what I went through . . . I saw some of the worst things people are capable of.” Ren was looking down, unable or unwilling to look her in the eye. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath before raising his head to look at her face. “I need to see . . . something beautiful. Something positive and, and loving.”

“I’m sorry,” Pyrrha said. “I’m very sorry. I, I’ve been hurting my friends a lot lately.”

“So have I,” Nora said. “I wasn’t there when you needed me Pyrrha, and Jaune suffered for it. Please forgive me.”

“There’s nothing to forgive,” Pyrrha said. “If Jaune had gone missing I wouldn’t have been . . . in the mood either.” Nora opened her mouth to protest, but Pyrrha cut her off. “Nora, you’re not obligated to do anything. Our arrangement—all our arrangements,” she said, looking at Ren, “has always been voluntary. You’re allowed to turn me down at any time, no questions asked. You’re my friend, not my concubine.”

“Right now I am,” Nora said, smiling. Then she got up and walked over to Pyrrha, hugging her. “Turn on the pheromones,” she said.

Pyrrha returned the hug, kissing the top of Nora’s head. “As you wish,” she said. Then, she pulled back and began rubbing her hands up and down Nora’s arms. At first, nothing happened, then Nora shuddered under her touch. The smaller girl gripped her shoulders. Pyrrha allowed herself to be pulled in for a kiss. It was strong, long kiss. Not a romantic one, but not devoid of affection either, and it was filled with passion. Both let out quiet moans when it broke. They stared at each other for a moment, before kissing again—now harder, even more passionately. They covered each other’s faces with kisses: lips, cheeks, and foreheads. They pulled each other close. Pyrrha’s hands began rubbing Nora’s opposite shoulders; Nora’s hands began massaging Pyrrha’s ribcage. They lifted up the taller girl’s shirt, then slipped under and made contact with her lover’s skin.
Pyrrha’s head rolled back, exposing her neck as Nora leaned forward and kissed it. Pyrrha’s powers did their work on both girls. Her pheromones igniting Nora’s arousal; Nora’s turning her own on. She gasped as the carrot-head’s hands slipped up over her stomach to grasp her breasts.

“Hhhhhrrrrrrrnnn . . .” she groaned as Nora squeezed her bra-less breasts, caressed them with her palms and fingers. Tweaked her nipples with her thumbs. “Oh! Oh. Nora . . .”

“Bed,” Nora whispered, somehow making it a question, a plea, and an invitation all at once.

“Bed,” Pyrrha replied. She picked the girl up by her waist, pulling her into another, hungrier kiss. Nora’s hands slipped down around her waist holding her close while still keeping her hands under Pyrrha’s shirt. The redhead sat Nora down on the bed. Breaking the kiss, she leaned back and began pulling up Nora’s night gown, the smaller girl wiggling to let Pyrrha pull it up over her butt. As she did this, Pyrrha looked over her lover’s shoulder to Ren. While she still had some degree of control over herself, she shot a worried look at her recovering friend. *Is this still all right?” the look asked.

Ren gave her an easy smile, one that held nothing of the suffering he must’ve endured over the past couple of weeks. *Yes,* he said. *Everything is all right.*

Pyrrha smiled, before pulling the night gown over Nora’s head, revealing the nude girl beneath to the cool air. Bending down, she kissed her, and surrendered to her nature. She became the predator, hungry and eager to devour her prey. She became a Succubus.

Pyrrha’s lips pressed against Nora’s harshly, forced her tongue into the girl’s mouth, sweeping inside it, trying to taste and feel every nook and cranny. Her hands gripped the girl under her shoulders, her thumbs gently massaging the flesh just below Nora’s breasts, teasing her by avoiding the orbs themselves. Enjoying the way the girl in question squirmed and moaned beneath her. Her species name was Latin for “One Who Lies Beneath,” but that was just medieval, patriarchal stereotyping. Succubi were just as proud and fierce as their male counterparts. *Her* name, *Nikos,* was Greek for “Victory,” and she had no intention of submitting to anyone, save—occasionally—her soulmate, Jaune.

Feeling Nora’s hands bunching up her shirt, trying to remove it despite their odd angle, Pyrrha pulled back, her libido spiking at the moan of loss the other girl let out. She didn’t pause to enjoy her victory, however, grabbing the offending garment and yanking it over her head, tossing it to the corner of the room. Bending over, she slid the bike shorts and panties down to her ankles, casually kicking free of the last bit of modesty. The predator smiled as her prey looked up and whimpered at the sight of her revealed form. Her prey was hungry too, eager to be fed upon. To be, as she’d said, Pyrrha’s concubine.

The predator had no intension of disappointing.

She climbed onto the bed, pushing her prey down and capturing her lips again. Nora whimpered into the kiss. She reached up and returned to Pyrrha’s breasts, taking advantage of their freedom from the shirt. She caressed them, kneaded them. Twirled her nipples with her thumbs. Pyrrha groaned and leaned her head back again. Nora took advantage of this and pushed up against her. Leaning her head down, Nora began kissing the taller girl’s collarbone, continuing to push up so she could go lower.

Pyrrha obliged and sat back on her knees, drawing Nora up with her and holding the girl’s head to her breasts. Nora latched onto her nipple and suckled like a babe, one hand still caressing the free breast. Pyrrha moaned at the treatment her teat was receiving, the gentle pressure and suction from Nora’s lips, the wetness and warmth of her tongue. Sadly, her pleasure was not the priority here. Breathing deeply to remind herself, taking in the scent of Nora’s pheromones and the wetness
between the girl’s thighs, Pyrrha reluctantly pulled the girl’s head back. She kissed her lover’s forehead to show her appreciation, then pushed her down again.

Pyrrha began to return the favor. She took Nora’s own larger breasts into her hands, feeling their softness and heaviness aroused a new wave of lust and hunger within the predator. Squeezing the orbs within her hands, she began to lay down kisses on them, on the side, the bottom, the edge, always careful to avoid the hardened nipples. Nora put her hands on Pyrrha’s head, tried to guide her to do what she wanted, but the Succubus was stronger than even her athletic frame suggested, and this time she would not allow her concubine to move her. She kissed and licked at the valley between the orbs, a place experience had taught her Nora was sensitive, making the girl beneath her squirm and squeal. Pyrrha began to pinch the hard nipples, twisting them, plucking them. Nora gasped at the erotic pain, tried to form words, but couldn’t.

The predator knew her prey was ready to be devoured. Dimly remembering Ren was watching them, smelling his own arousal at the sight of the two lovely women loving one another, she released Nora’s right breast and leaned back, allowing the recovering Gumiho to see what was happening to his mate. Her hand trailed down Nora’s stomach, over her the sensitive skin below her waist, then twisted around to her hip and down her thigh. Reaching down to squeeze a buttock, Pyrrha pulled the leg out, exposing the tangled mess of bright orange hairs between her thighs. Her eyes zeroed in on the sight below her, the moisture leaking out of the swollen lips hidden by the nest of curls. The predator smiled as she went in for the kill.

Releasing her prey’s buttock, her hand slid over the thigh once more, then dipped down to play with that special place. Her fingers toyed with the swollen labia, rubbing circles over them, reaching back to scrub the special piece of flesh atop them with her index finger, making Nora cry out so loudly, Pyrrha wondered if she woke the others. Only then, did she deign to slip her finger inside the warm, wet channel.

Nora’s moans continued as Pyrrha pumped her finger in and out of her, twirled it around in the sweet passage. Her thumb meanwhile, found Nora’s clit and teased it. Her concubine bucked beneath her, but the Succubus held her in place, still kneading the breast in her hand. Pleased with the reaction, the predator slipped a second finger in with the first, pumping both, spreading them to stretch her prey’s channel, her thumb continuing its work.

“AAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!!!!!!” Nora cried, not yet orgasming; she was just a vocal lover. The predator knew this, but she also knew her prey’s death throes weren’t far away. Dipping down, she delivered the killing blow: Whilst slipping a third finger into Nora’s pussy, Pyrrha finally latched her lips around the girl’s nipple, biting with her teeth and lashing with her tongue.

“EEEEEEEE—” Nora’s back arched as she let out the first note before her voice—finally—failed her. She hung suspended for a moment, before collapsing on the bed, panting as she rode out the remains of her orgasm.

The predator pulled back and removed her fingers from Nora. Licking them clean, she examined her prey, pleased with her work. The proud, vibrant girl had been reduced to a gasping, defeated conquest, incapable of anything beyond panting. Ignoring the fire between her own thighs, she bent down and spread Nora’s. The girl groaned as Pyrrha put her face against her womanhood, smelled the delicious scent for a moment, before latching onto the other girl’s opening, intent on claiming all of her delicious juices. Her tongue lashed about inside the girl’s used orifice, lapping the liquids within as cat lapped milk.

“Sissty—Sissdy . . .” Nora whispered above her, unable to form words.

Pyrrha felt a hand on her shoulder and shrugged it off, looking up from her meal with fire in her
eyes. Who dared disturb the predator’s feast?

Ren smiled in the face of her anger. “She’s trying to say ‘69,’” he said.

The Succubus looked back at her prey, who nodded, vigorously, unable to enunciate her desires. The fire in her loins asserted itself like a lion’s roar and Pyrrha almost carelessly stroked her own neatly trimmed mound with a finger. She shuddered, her suspicions confirmed. She smiled at Nora. Such a loyal, loving friend. Such a good, pleasing concubine.

Careful of Ren, she got out of bed, then climbed back in again, swinging her leg over Nora’s face. Placing the other one on the mattress, Pyrrha lowered her lips, both sets, to Nora’s.

Despite her exhaustion, Nora somehow found the strength to grip her friend’s thighs and pull her closer, thrusting her tongue deeply into her. Nora licked vigorously, both out of a desire to please her friend and because of the taste of Pyrrha’s love juices, so much sweeter than even the best tasting human woman, not that Nora had much experience with those. She licked the passage and the lips, even the short, course hairs that covered the mound. But mostly, she drank her partner’s pleasure.

For her part, Pyrrha returned the favor with equal enthusiasm. She sucked and licked at Nora’s enflamed labia, meaded her buttocks in her hands, flicked the girl’s clit and explored her passage with her tongue. Both sides of Pyrrha were joined in a united assault. The predator demanded more sustenance from her prey; the woman desired to share the pleasure she experienced with her ma—her lover.

Taking a page from her partner’s book, Nora released one of Pyrrha’s thighs to slip her fingers into the taller girl’s folds. Pyrrha felt her climax approaching, her arousal too high to maintain this state for long. Deciding to once again up the ante even further, she paused to lick one of her fingers, then slowly but firmly used it to pierce Nora’s back hole.

Nora screamed once again, this time into Pyrrha’s womanhood, the vibrations and pheromones sending the taller girl over the edge as well. Her knees and elbows went out, and she collapsed on top of Nora. She rolled her hips and torso off Nora, her face still next to Nora’s mound. Gently this time, she lapped up the other girl’s fluids, taking the life-giving liquids. Thankfully, her own pleasure hadn’t expended all of what she had taken from Nora’s first climax, but every little bit helped.

Perhaps to even the score, Nora leaned over and placed a kiss on her womanhood.

Pyrrha moaned a little. “Thank you, Nora,” she said, when she was finished with her meal.

“What are friends for?” Nora asked, tiredly. “Besides pancakes and birthday presents?”

“I don’t know,” Pyrrha said. She lay there for a moment, before sitting up. “Feel better, Ren?”

“Much,” he said. Neither mentioned the massive tent below his blankets or the scent of his own arousal that mixed with her’s and Nora’s.

“Don’t worry, Ren,” Nora said, snuggling up next to her mate. “We’ll be making love again soon,” she said as Ren wrapped his arms around her.

“Good night, Nora. Ren,” Pyrrha said, getting up and gathering her clothes. She felt a hand grab her wrist.

“Stay with us, Pyrrha,” Nora pleaded.
“Sorry, Nora,” the redhead said to the carrot-haired girl, delicately, removing Nora’s hand. “But I have my own mate to return to tonight.”

“You know he wouldn’t mind,” Nora said, giving Pyrrha her best kicked-puppy eyes.

Pyrrha refused to look back at her (now former) concubine. “I would Nora. I would.”

Chapter End Notes

OK. Well, I guess we all know what Pyrrha is by now. Kudos to everyone who guessed it earlier.

To all my fellow nerds: yes, I stole Pyrrha's line "screw my biology!" from LOST GIRL. To a degree, Bo is a sort of template for how Pyrrha reacts her nature, and I mean Bo when her nature is making a mess of her relationships and hacking away at her self-worth, not the times when she's reveling in it. Not that I minded Bo in those moments, just that Pyrrha is not now (and may never be) in that place. Right now she's heartbroken she can't have a white-picket fence, monogamous, classical romance. And, this is one of her better days. I'm afraid we're going to see worse before this is done.

In all fairness, though, being a member of her species isn't all cupcakes and happy endings. Dearg wasn't lying, this species' diet means a lot of them end up as sex-workers. Pyrrha and her parents were lucky to avoid that fate (I may do a one-shot or something to show a typical day in Mr. and Mrs. Nikos' lives, just to show how much effort and support is needed to be what they are), even if Pyrrha doesn't feel particularly blessed.

I actually have given a lot of thought to how Pyrrha's biology works to facilitate her species' needs (spoiler: oral sex isn't their only method of feeding). While that will show up later, but I might post it here if people ask me. If only because I'm sure someone will pester me about how females avoid getting pregnant once or twice a year (Pyrrha is her father's biological child), especially before birth control.

This has been an extremely weird lecture to write.
Home

Chapter Notes

Here’s a question: What does "Home" mean to you?

WARNING: Lemon in this chapter. Also some light-ish gore and references to torture and dehumanization. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You’ll be pleased to know,” Ironwood said, “that Mr. Thrush is still Human. The silver seems to have done its work.”

“That’s a relief,” Winter said, sipping her coffee.

“Indeed,” Ironwood said. “He’s still quite eager to join us.”

“Hmph. He should go back to his old life,” Winter said.

“Perhaps,” Ironwood said. “Still, he’s willing to fight, and we have a hard time finding new recruits for this business.”

Winter held her tongue; she was certain this was a reference to her unwillingness to let Weiss be recruited. “I can’t train him. It’ll be hard enough to deal with this Winchester boy without revealing to Weiss what’s going on.”

“We could arrange for someone else to mentor the boy,” Ironwood said.

The Schnee woman thought it over. “No,” she said. “His father asked me. Besides, I was the last one to see him alive. I . . . I owe this to him.

"Very well," Ironwood said. They'd worked together long enough for him to have come to trust her judgement. If Winter thought she could handle the work-load, she could. End of story. "You may go Winter."

"Thank you, sir," she replied. Exiting his office, she considered strategies for telling the young Mr. Winchester. He was Weiss' classmate, which would make keeping the nature of their interactions a secret from her sister difficult. She considered picking the two up together from classes but decided against it; Winchester would probably ask about Vampires, and that would get ugly very, very fast. So she had to find a way to meet the boy alone and deal with matters.

Winter fished out her cell phone. She needed to make some calls.

"Ruby, what’s the difference between Sine and Cosine?” Weiss asked.

“What?” Ruby asked. “Weiss we just finished the exam!”

“I know! Just . . . just help me check my score,” the heiress snapped.

“Weiss,” Yang said, in a voice one uses when speaking to someone with their finger on the
detonator. “You’ve spent what, a week, two weeks, studying for this exam. And you’ve got three more days’ worth of tests to take. Take a breath girl.”

Weiss opened her mouth to argue, then closed it. She took a deep breath and exhaled. “Fine,” she said. “Pyrrha,” she asked, “are you ready?”

Pyrrha displayed no problems with being treated like a chauffeur “Almost. Head over to the car. I’ll be there in five minutes.”

“Good,” the heiress replied. She turned to go, then stopped. Turning back to Ruby, she said, “I’ll see you tomorrow, Ruby.”

“See you, Princess,” Ruby said, grinning.

“Dolt, stop calling me that,” Weiss whispered, turning so no one would see her flushing face. She speed walked to Pyrrha’s car.

“That girl is weird,” Yang commented.

“Like the rest of us are any better?” Blake snorted.

"I'd better get going," Pyrrha said. She kissed Jaune on the cheek. "I'll call you later, all right?

"Sure," the blonde boy said, blushing. "See ya."

Pyrrha found Weiss standing next to her car, tapping her feet, "Problem?" the redhead asked.

"No," Weiss said. Pyrrha said nothing and let the other girl into her car. They drove in silence for a few minutes, before Weiss spoke again. "My sister will be home tonight," she said.

"I know," Pyrrha said.

"I still don't know how to tell her about Ruby."

"You mean that you're dating her, not that she's a Vampire," Pyrrha remarked.

"Right. How do I . . . come out to her?"

Pyrrha sighed. "There are people twice your age wondering that question, Weiss," she said. "All I can say is . . . don't feel like you have to rush into it. This relationship with Ruby is still pretty new. Why don't you just focus on exploring it for a while and work out how to tell your sister later?"

"I suppose . . ." Weiss said. Pyrrha signed. She knew it wasn't the best option, but what else could she say? It wasn't like there was ever a big question over her sexuality. Oh, the joys of being a Succubus.

Winter knocked on the door of the apartment. There was no answer. At first all she heard was the noise of traffic on the street, but as she listened, she heard the sounds of something moving around within the room. Someone was approaching the door. She waited. Still, there was no answer. There was no word spoken.

“Cardin Winchester?” she asked. “Are you in there?”

As an answer, she heard the rack! of a shotgun chambering a round.

Winter grimaced. “I’m a friend of your father,” she said.
“. . . What’s his name?” the voice said from inside the room.


Cardin didn’t answer, but the door opened. The teenager stood in the doorway, still holding the shotgun, though at least it wasn’t aimed at her.

"May I come inside?" She asked.

"Can you?" Cardin asked lazily, like this was a ritual he had no interest in but also no choice in taking part of.

Winter resisted the urge to make a disparaging comment and stepped over the threshold. "As a matter of fact, yes, I can." Not that it meant anything; the only Vampires who needed invitations to enter were the ones dumb enough to believe their own myths.

Cardin shrugged and closed the door. He sat down in the chair, the shotgun laying across his lap. “You’re one of my dad’s friends?” he asked. The boy was smirking. “Sorry, lady, but if you think Dad’s interested in a repeat performance or something, you’d better leave. Save yourself a let-down.”

Winter blanked for a moment, before the obvious explanation hit her. Oh. So, Gordon Walker had filled the void his wife had left with one-night stands because starting a real relationship was impossible. He was too broken up over the loss of his One True Love, or his life was too dangerous to let himself get close to someone again. Yada, yada, yada, typical action-hero alpha-male type stuff. The said thing was, her own father was much the same way. She wondered if the Scavs encouraged this sort of self-destructive behavior. By contrast, Slayers encouraged each other to seek counselling if they lost a loved one, because kamikazes with nothing to fuel them beyond vengeance tended not to last very long or accomplish much. It was one thing to rush bravely into battle; it was another to have no fear of death because you thought you had nothing to live for.

“I’m not . . . our relationship was purely professional,” Winter stated. Cardin’s eyes widened, and he looked her up and down. “Not like that!” she screeched before she could help herself. This boy had a one-track mind. “We knew each other . . . through your father’s . . . work.” If she could actually call it that.

“One of the ‘vampire hunters?’” Cardin asked. As if the blank stare wasn’t enough, his tone of voice informed her how unlikely the young man thought that seemed.

So, Cardin didn’t share his father’s conviction in the existence of monsters, then. Well, this was going to become awkward. “Not exactly,” she said, which was the truth. She wasn’t one of those morons Gordon Winchester had hung around with.

Cardin grunted and went to shut the door behind her. She stopped him.

"No" she said. "I need you to come with me.” The look on his face suggested she'd just told a bad joke. "It's about your father."

Ruby lay on her bed, a notebook opened in front of her. She was supposed to be studying. She WANTED to be studying. Instead, she was thinking.

Ren had been captured and abused by Specialists. Weiss' sister was a Specialist. Weiss' sister had been missing but would soon return today. Did Weiss' sister, the white-haired heiress obviously loved and admired, have something to do with Ren's torture? Did she know about Nora's family and
the others? Was everyone Ruby knew in danger?

That was an unpleasant question, but it wasn't the worst one her mind was asking. Instead, she wondered if WEISS was in danger. It was silly, she knew, but it didn’t change anything. Ruby had read and been told plenty of stories over the years of tragic or nearly tragic romances between Humans Creatures. Quite a few—most, actually—involving the Human’s own family turning on them. So, it was understandable that Ruby be worried about her mate's safety.

Ruby frowned. That was another problem: as Yang had pointed out a few nights ago, she was moving pretty fast in her relationship with Weiss, faster than Weiss wanted. As unpleasant as the thought was, Ruby was forced to admit there was some truth to this statement. She’d only just barely started dating the girl, and already she thought of Weiss as her mate. That was probably not a good thing.

Ruby clenched her notebook, ignoring the fact that she was ripping the pages. Yang didn't understand. She wasn’t a Creature, not really. Changing eyes, immunity to Vampirism, and few other oddities aside, the blonde was for all intents and purposes Human. She didn’t know how strong mating instincts were. Probably why she had dated Ren (who, raised by Humans, was just as ignorant), even though anyone could see he and Nora were made for each other, and Blake had been pining after the blonde since she'd laid eyes on her.

Ruby snorted, rolling onto her stomach. Yang’s Human ignorance didn’t stop her from eagerly reciprocating Blake’s advances when the Were had finally worked up the courage to ask her out. Ruby blushed, wondering if she was as awkward as Blake had been when she started going out with Yang. Or, Pyrrha when she finally confessed to Jaune after watching the boy bumble around perfectly oblivious to the Succubus’ obvious interest. At least Neptune had had the advantage of self-confidence.

Ruby frowned. Blake and Pyrrha had both moved slowly when it came to their human mates. The first night Yang had gone out with Blake, Ruby had honestly expected she wouldn't see her sister again until the next morning, and that Yang would have Blake’s bite on her neck. To her surprise, her sister was back by midnight, and there was no scent of blood (or anything else) to indicate Blake had laid claim to her. At school, the young Vampire had secretly asked Blake what was going on. Blake had actually blushed a little before explaining her reasoning: since Yang was Human, the Were wanted to give her ample time to decide whether or not Blake was what she really wanted. As if Yang had ever doubted what she wanted. But there was something else, too. Even Creatures, Blake said, could make mistakes about their mates, and Blake wanted to make sure Yang really was the one for her.

Ruby hadn't understood that statement then, but she'd put it out of her mind a couple months later when Yang had come home the morning after she'd gone out with Blake, a fresh bite mark on her neck (which also confirmed that Yang was immune to Therianthropy as well as Vampirism).

Ruby had understood Pyrrha’s motivations a little better. The redhead had fallen for a full-blooded Human. At least Yang had been raised among Creatures and knew a thing or two about what they were really like (though there had been a few stumbling blocks along the way. Ruby still remembered the time shortly before her mother died that Yang had asked her to turn into a bat. Ruby had replied that she didn’t know how. Yang’s solution was to try jumping from increasingly tall perches before their parents caught them and asked what in blue blazes they were doing. Ruby recalled Dad had laughed at the bat thing and had spent the next two nights on the couch waiting for his mates to stop glaring at him); Jaune was clueless to the fact that A) monsters were real, and B) 90% of folklore was wrong. Ruby didn't know what the conversation was like when Pyrrha had "come out" to him, but she wouldn't be surprised if Jaune had actually wondered if Pyrrha would
suck his soul out with a kiss.

Still, the pair had made it work. Jaune had accepted Pyrrha for what she was and all the weirdness that came with it. If he could do that, then she knew Weiss could do the same for her, given time.

Time. Yes, that was what Weiss needed, and time meant space. Ruby groaned, burying her head into her pillow. She had to give Weiss her space until she was ready to accept Ruby as her mate. So, until such a time as that, Ruby would have to watch how she acted around the white-haired girl and try not to imagine how nice she felt holding Weiss in her arms on prom night. Or imagining how the pale, white-haired girl would look like with reflective, Vampire eyes. Or what it would be like to fall asleep and wake up cuddling with her mate like Yang and Blake or Jaune and Pyrrha or Nora and Ren. Or . . .

Ruby screamed into her pillow, kicking her legs against the bed in a contained tantrum.

"How much trouble is the old man in?" Cardin asked. Winter couldn't blame him for his concern; the Slayers had established their headquarters in an office building for rent that had once been owned by the police.

"The police had been forced to move their headquarters almost thirty years ago," Winter explained, parking her car in the back lot. "The building was bought by an investment company; they rent it now." She didn't mention that the "investment company" was owned by the Slayers. It allowed them access to a secure location whenever they needed to establish a presence in the area with no one the wiser. And when they weren't needed, the building literally paid for itself. "Follow me," she said, getting out of the car.

Cardin did. If he thought the level of security was too much for an office building—I.D. card readers, metal detectors, bomb-sniffing dogs out in the open, and guards wearing anti-stab vests—he didn't comment on any of it. Winter wondered how he would react if he knew the dogs' job was to sniff out monsters rather than bombs, and the reason the guards wore stab-proof vests instead of bullet-proof ones was because they were more accustomed to enemies slashing at them with claws than ones who drew guns and shot them.

The multiple security checkpoints did result in a comment, however. "Don't you think this is a little paranoid?" he asked, as he was ushered through a reinforced metal door that led into the morgue. "I
mean, don’t you think it’s hard enough to get in through the front door? How badly do you think someone’s going to try to get at a bunch of stiff’s?"

“You’d be surprised,” Winter answered. The door wasn’t actually a relic from the building’s police days; it was added in when the Slayers renovated the building. You couldn’t always be sure a corpse was really a corpse.

“So where’s my dad?” Cardin asked, bored.

"In here," Winter said, leading the way into the morgue. "Dr. Merlot?" she asked.

A gray-haired gentleman looked up from his clipboard. "Is that the boy?" he asked, unconcerned.

Winter nodded, and Merlot walked over to a covered slab.

Cardin swallowed. "Hey, uh, listen if-ah, well . . ."

Merlot unceremoniously pulled the sheet off the slab. Despite knowing what to expect, Winter winced at the sight. The upside was that the coroner hadn't begun cutting into the dead man's body yet, so it was mostly intact—aside from the massive head-wound and the severed head. Merlot was what could generously be described as "de-sensitized to violence."

"Da-Dad?" Cardin asked, walking around the slab, so he could see his father's face. Winter wondered whether she should put a hand on his shoulder or something, when he turned and vomited.

Merlot frowned at the condition of his floor, but Winter glared at him. It was his own fault he had chosen not to disguise the head wound. Likewise that he had taken the sheet off the body, revealing the decapitation (a necessity, sadly; the bullet to his brain had almost certainly killed Gordon Winchester before he'd completed the transition, but it didn't pay to take things for granted).

"What . . . ?" Cardin asked, gagging. "What happened to him?"

Winter took a breath. "Vampires," she said.

"What the fuck?" the boy said. "Vampires? Fuck it, that's . . . that's CRAZY! My Dad was crazy! And all those psychos . . ."

"I'm afraid Vampires are quite real, Mr. Winchester," Merlot said, dragging out a new slab from the cabinet. It contained the rapidly-decaying body of the Vampire nest's alpha. "Look."

Cardin took one look at the severed, rotting head and promptly turned on his heel. "Wait," Winter said, stepping in front of him. He stopped, looking like he was contemplating decking her. Merlot came up behind him and grabbed the young man by the arm and the shoulder, dragging him back to the slab. "Be careful with him, Merlot," she said.

"Look at the teeth, boy," the man said. "Look at the gums. Press them! Press them!" Cardin twisted in his hold, the self-defense training his father had put him through began to assert itself. The young man tried to kick the older one in the groin, knee, or shin, stomp on his toes, even head-butt him. No matter, what he did, Merlot avoided it, and the young man couldn't break his steely grip. He maneuvered the boy's hand out and forced him to press his finger against the dead bloodsucker's gum.

"It, it's a tooth!" Cardin gasped in horror.

"It's not a tooth; it's a fang," the doctor said, releasing the boy. It was closer to a throw, actually. "A
retractable set of Vampire fangs."

Winter came up to Cardin. "Cardin," she said, "You're father. He was right, there are monsters out there. He tried to fight them. To make the world a better place for you and for your children."

". . . And my Mom?" the young man asked. "Was she, was she killed by Vampires too?"

"I don't know," Winter said. "Those men your father worked with, they didn't know anything about what monsters are really like. They were fools, and a lot of them were killed fighting things they didn't really know how to fight."

Cardin frowned. "Will you teach me? Teach me what Vampires and whatever are really like? How do I fight them?" His eyes became very hard. "How do I kill them?"

"I have to be strong now," Cardin finished. Turning to the body he continued. "Yeah, sounds like him. I promise you Dad, I will be strong. I'll get strong enough to kill all those freaks. Every single one of them."

Winter watched as the innocent boy died, and a new Slayer was born. No matter how many times she saw it, it never became any less unpleasant.

"Hey, Jaune," Pyrrha said as she stepped through the door to they boy's house.

"Pyrrha, Jaune replied, smiling as she kissed his cheek.

"Where is everyone?" she asked.

"Out," he said. "Mom's at work, and my sisters are all doing their after-school stuff. The usual."

Pyrrha nodded. Jaune was often home alone, though that was often convenient for them. The pair retired to Jaune's room to study for the next day's exam. Sitting on the bed, the couple poured over their notes and munched in snacks. Pyrrha didn't pay much attention to it at first, until she noticed Jaune wasn't eating a candy bar. It was a protein bar, and he was on his second.

"Jaune," she asked. "Are you all right?"

Her mate gave her a funny look, before he saw where her eyes were focused. "Yeah, I've mostly recovered, I think. Just trying to build up the reserves. It'll be a while before Ren's strong enough to be back in rotation, so I gotta be ready." He sighed. "Glad I got a break last night, though. Honestly, Pyrrha Thani was a little worried my . . . 'you know' was going to fall off. Pyrrha? Pyrrha?"

The redhead wasn't listening; she was too busy berating herself. How could she have been so stupid? How had she failed to notice what she was doing to Jaune? Dearg was right; she had nearly killed her mate. And she hadn't realized it until it was nearly too late. What was wrong with her?

"I'm sorry, Jaune!" Pyrrha cried, hugging him. "I'm so, so sorry!"

"It's OK," he said, trying to hug back.

"It is NOT OK!" she said, pulling back to glare at him through the tears. "Jaune . . . I keep hurting you. When Ren was gone, I used it as an excuse to try for a monogamous relationship, and I nearly KILLED you!"

"Yeah, well . . . I was pretty dumb to go along with it. I should've realized you needed it too much--"
"How are you all right with this?" Pyrrha screamed. "How are you... Jaune, why don't you ever complain? I'm a parasite! And a slut! Aren't you hurt? Or jealous? Why don't you say anything? Why?" She was so upset, she actually started hitting the blonde boy in the chest.

"Wooph" Jaune fell back under the force of the blow. Thankfully, all investment Jaune had in his own ego had long ago dried up from hanging out with (and dating) super-strong girls.

"Jaune!" Pyrrha climbed on top of him. Normally, this would be a pleasant experience for both of them. Right now, less so. "Are you all right?" she asked, ripping his shirt open so she could examine his chest. Again, under normal circumstances, this would mean things were going pretty well for the pair.

"I'm fine," he said, trying to hide the whince as he got up.

"I can see a bruise forming," Pyrrha said.

"Does that ever bother you?" Jaune asked.

"What?"

"You asked if what you are bothers me. Pyrrha... does it ever bother you that I'm just human?" Jaune waved a hand over himself. "I'm not as strong as you, or as tough. I'll age faster, so by the time you've hit the Succubus version of middle-age, you'll be a widow... Doesn't that bother you?"

"No, of course not! I..."

"Yes, Jaune it bothers me. It bothers me that you're so fragile, that I can hurt you by accident." She gently traced her hand over his chest. It was so light, so delicate, that Jaune could hardly feel it, even over the bruise. "I want to ask you to let Ruby or Blake turn you, so you'll be tougher and have more vitality. But..."


"And even if Blake isn't from a monogamous bloodline... she's just healthier than a normal Human," Pyrrha sighed. "You could live to be an old Human, but you'd still have a shorter lifespan than mine."

"Better than being immortal and watching you die," Jaune said softly.

Pyrrha frowned. "Oh, so I can watch you grow old, but you won't do the same for me?"

"Oh, I didn't think of that," Jaune said. Frowning, he thought. "Of course, if I go first, you'll die eventually. If I'm a Vampire, I could live for hundreds or thousands of years after you've died. That's not exactly fair, is it?"

"None of this is fair," Pyrrha said. She lay her head down on her mate's chest, careful to avoid the bruise. She felt his heart beat against her head. So strong and steady, for now.

Jaune wrapped his arms around her. "Pyrrha... you asked me if I was hurt or jealous... I was, in the beginning. It bothered me that you were..."

"Sleeping around?" Pyrrha asked.

"Feeding on other people," Jaune said. "I felt like I wasn't enough for you, and I guess I'm not, from a biological point of view I mean. That was the other thing: did you really like me?" He felt her
stiffen in his arms. "I mean you can understand it, right? Why would such a beautiful, smart, popular, and talented girl want to spend time with a guy like me?"

Pyrrha forced herself back up right. "I'm not perfect, Jaune," she said.

He smiled. "You are to me," he said, then kissed her. "You're perfect, Pyrrha, except for one thing."

She sighed. "I'm biologically programmed for infidelity?" she asked.

"No," he said. "You hate yourself too much."

"But you said:"

"I said it did bother me, at first. Then, I saw how much you hated yourself for it, how much you wished you didn't have to." He chuckled. "Then it hit me that for some bizarre reason, you actually loved me."

"It's no more bizarre than you loving me," she said.

Jaune shook his head. "No. I've seen how much the others care about you. Ren and Nora. Dearg and Ban. And I know you care about them . . . maybe more than you realize." Pyrrha opened her mouth to protest. "I know it's not the same as what you feel for me, but you do care about them. They're not just . . . I don't know meals? Conquests?" Jaune looked Pyrrha in the eyes. "You're not a parasite, Pyrrha. And you're not a slut. You're a girl who is loved by so many and loves so much back it hurts. And you're the girl I want to spend the rest of my life with."

"Wha-?" It wasn't the most articulate of sounds, but Pyrrha had no idea how to accurately convey her feelings. She knew that was how Jaune felt about her and that felt the same way in return, but this was the first time either one of them had said it so . . . bluntly.

Jaune scratched the back of his head. "Listen, Pyrrha, we've been 'dating' or whatever for about a year now, acting like normal teenagers. But the thing is . . . we're not a normal couple. The other night . . . what happened with Ren, it made me realize how fragile life is, even for superhuman Creatures." Pyrrha frowned a little at his description. Jaune continued speaking as he reached over to the desk beside his bed. "And I realized . . . no matter how careful we are, things can still happen. Bad things. And, well . . ." Jaune opened the drawer and took something out. "I'm tired of trying to act like we're normal, like there's nothing special about you or our relationship." IN his hands, he held a small, black box out of his pocket. He opened it to reveal a plain, gold ring.

"Pyrrha, will you marry me?"

A moment passed. Then a second. Pyrrha could only stare at the gold circlet within the box.

"Pyrrha?" Jaune asked. "Are you OK? Oh, no! I'm supposed to be kneeling, aren't I? Crap! I can't believe I forgot to kneel! I knew I should have practiced this. Bad enough I'm using Dad's ring . . ." Jaune kept babbling as he tried to crawl off the bed.

He stopped when Pyrrha's arm snaked out and locked his own in a vice-like grip. "Your Dad's ring? That's your father's ring?" Pyrrha asked.

Jaune looked as though he wished a hole would open up in the bed and swallow him. "I got it after he died. I know, it's not much, but I can't afford a real diamond. And I wanted to give you something better than my class ring. I should've given you my class ring, shouldn't I? At least it has a jewel in I--"
The Blonde stopped babbling as Pyrrha launched her self at him. Heedless of his bruised chest she wrapped her arms around him, drawing him in and kissing as hard as she could. For a moment, neither one could think of anything except the sensation of lips mashing together in joy and passion. Finally, the need for oxygen overcame the desire to express love. The two pulled back, gasping. "Yes," Pyrrha said. "Yes, of course I'll marry you!"

"Really?" Jaune asked. "Great!" He pulled the ring out to slip it on her finger.

"Not yet!" Pyrrha laughed. "Jaune, I love you, but I don't think your family is ready for this."

"Oh, yeah," Jaune chuckled. "Yeah, I guess I should've thought of that. What about your's?"

"Succubi, Jaune," she said. "They're going to be ecstatic." She leaned in and kissed him again.

The pair continued kissing. Pyrrha's hands began to roam over Jaune's chest. She stopped when she felt him whince. "I'm sorry," she said, pulling back.

"Don't be," he said. "We should probably get back to studying. Three more days of finals to study for, right?"

"Right," Pyrrha said. The pair kissed again, shoving their books and notes to the floor. "Jaune, are you sure?" she asked.

"It's been three days," he whispered, as his hands pulled up the t-shirt she wore. "You fed last night." He pulled the shirt over her head. "And I've had a few protein bars over the course of the past few days."

As Pyrrha brought her arms down, she decided to quit thinking. Reaching behind her back, she undid the clasp of her bra, Jaune helping her slip it off. The two embraced again, mashing their bare torsos together as they kissed. Jaune began kissing down Pyrrha's jaw. Down her neck. The redhead pushed his head further down, until he came to her breasts. Jaune kissed a line along the curve of one until he came to the nipple. Opening his mouth, he took the peak in, sucking it hungrily, lashing mercilessly with his tongue. His hand came up and cupped her other breast, squeezing and tugging at the mound of flesh, thumbing the nipple.

Pyrrha moaned as she held him there, arching her back to give him more access. All of a sudden, she yanked him back. She kissed the startled boy again before shoving him away. Unceremoniously, she undid her jeans, forcing the pants and panties down her legs. Jaune saw what she was doing and copied her, fumbling with his jeans to get them off, before Pyrrha grapped the offending pieces of denim and yanked them away. Balling them up, she tossed them into the corner.

The Succubus pounced on her prey. Kneeling between her legs, Pyrrha wrapped her fingers around his erection. Licking her lips, she opened her mouth and licked the lip of the organ, lapping up a drop of precum. Jaune groaned, throwing his head back, knowing he was helpless until his beloved was satisfied. Strangely, he was reminded of the first time Pyrrha took him into her mouth. Behind the school gym, when she'd knelt in front of him and unzipped his pants to--

Suddenly it became too much effort to walk down memory lane, as Pyrrha in the present took his cock into her mouth. Her tongue seemed to wrap around his shaft like her fingers had as she bobbed her head up and down on him. Those fingers had now reached down to fondle his balls. Jaune groaned as the treatment continued. Pyrrha sucked his manhood deep into her throat, teasing it with her tongue, while massaging his sack with her hand. It was too much for a man to take. Sensing his end was near, Pyrrha increased suction as he exploded, flooding her mouth with his warm seed.

Many Human women disliked the taste of semen, but to a Succubus, it was druglike. The redhead
eagerly drank it, tonguing Jaune's glands to ensure she got every drop.

Jaune himself groaned slightly as he impotently twitched on the sheets. Satisfied with herself, Pyrrha released his semi-erect manhood, crawling up his body in painfully slow motion, letting him feel her breasts drag against his flesh, pressing her own dripping sex against his own. Jaune groaned again, and Pyrrha captured his mouth in a kiss. Jaune returned the kiss, his tongue dancing with hers, unconcerned about what had just been in it. Pyrrha growled a little, rubbing her body against her mate's to demonstrate her need.

He pulled away, pushing her onto her back. Pyrrha smiled and purred, opening her legs for her mate. Unlike his Succubus, Jaune leaned down slowly, until he was face-to-face with the thin, trimmed patch of scarlet hairs. He kissed it, earning a mewl of pleasure from his love (sometimes he wondered if Blake was really the one of feline descent), the he licked up the length of her slit. Pyrrha responded by opening her thighs further and pushing her pelvis into his ministrations. Jaune kept licking, trying to taste every inch of her pussy: both labia, her passage, her clit . . .

"Grrrrr-owrrrr!" In a burst of passion, Pyrrha pushed Jaune off her. The next thing he knew, he was on his back, and Pyrrha was above him, his once again erect cock gripped in her hand as she maneuvered it to her opening. Pyrrha smiled a feral smile. "My mate . . ." she hissed, rubbing herself against his member then, she sank down onto him.

"Hhh!" Jaune gasped at the sensations, stil ltneder from his earlier orgasm. Pyrrha rode him hard and fast, slamming repeatedly against his groin. Still, the sight was certainly worth it: Pyrrha's hair plastered to her brow by sweat, her breasts bouncing as she rose up and down, the play of her muscles, and the way his member disappeared into her pussy. His hands reached up and grasped her breasts again.

"Pyrrha!" Jaune forced out, feeling the end nearing. Even after a year of Pyrrha's touch, he could still only last so long. "I, I love you!"

"Say it again," the Succubus hissed.

"I love you!"

"Again!"

"I LOVE YOU!"

Jaune jerked his hips as he came, hitting Pyrrha at just the right angle to finish her as well. The Succubus threw her head back and howled in triumph. She continued to jerk herself on Jaune's cock, pumping long strings of semen into her womb. They never bothered with condoms; not only was Pyrrha immune to human STDs (and unable to carry them), it was ridiculously hard to get a Succubus pregnant. Special glands within her channel absorbed her partner's sexual fluids, drawing them into her system to be converted into nourishment. Pyrrha had no clue how hard her mother must have tried to conceive her or how the woman was so certain Pyrrha was her mate's offspring.

The couple lay spent for a moment. For Pyrrha, sex with Jaune was always so much more intense and fulfilling than any other partner; as much as her more feral side enjoyed rutting with Nora and
the others, the passion and closeness she felt for Jaune eclipsed all that. She smiled. Apparently, there was something girl and Creature agreed on. Jaune just lay there, recovering his strength. Pyrrha let him be, tracing circles on his chest, eventually moving down to lick the sweat on it. This drew a groan from the blonde's lips.

"You're insatiable," he muttered.

"I know." Pyrrha kissed his nipple. "But remember, you said you love it."

"I guess I did," Jaune said, before rallying his strength and flipping her over. A grin tugged at Pyrrha's lips; the Creature was pleased with her mate's stamina. She let him guide the pace this time—mostly. Rather than the rough, demanding mating fueled by berserk lust, the pair made slow, gentle love.

Mostly.

Winter didn't get out immediately after parking her car in the garage. Instead, she slumped against her seat. Driving wasn't the best time to think heavy thoughts, and right now her thoughts were as weighty as one of those 1,000 lb. trapezoids cartoon characters used to drop on each other.

First, there was Cardin. Training the boy would be an intensive, time-consuming task, but it was necessary, if she didn't train him, he would just run off on his own and get himself killed. Or get others killed because he didn't know what he was doing—like the Scavs. Besides she had made a promise to his father, and deathbed promises were hard to break. Unfortunately, that would keep her away from Weiss even more often. Winter thumped her head back against the headrest. She didn't like leaving Weiss alone; she missed her sister. More importantly, she worried about her. Winter had spent a small fortune on self-defense lessons and enthusiastically supporting Weiss' fencing, all to make sure her younger sister could take care of herself. It wasn't enough, though, and Winter knew it. She had seen too many experienced Slayers die on missions to know think otherwise. There was always someone—something—better. There were always x-factors you didn't train for. And there was always the possibility of an ambush.

Being good, even being the best wasn't enough to guarantee safety.

There were times when Winter seriously considered indulging in Ironwood's desire to induct Weiss into the Society of the Slayers. It would mean destroying her sister's entire world view, and forcing her into danger, which was why Winter never considered for very long before quashing the idea. But the tempting thing, the single fact that always made the idea come up again and again, was that joining the society would guarantee that Weiss would never have to face the danger alone.
Thinking of the Society brought other ideas to mind. Ironwood had informed her earlier that one of their containment facilities on the Southside docks had been hit a couple of nights ago. It was terrifying; while she was out of town, far away from her baby sister, monsters had stormed a Society-controlled building and either killed, hospitalized, or disappeared a couple dozen trained Slayers. Not elite members, of course, and the building itself wasn't exactly on par with headquarters in terms of security, just a secret place where they could question the Creatures they captured without interference, but that wasn't much comfort, especially as the Gumiho they were in the process of interrogating had apparently been rescued. Winter wasn't a fool; she knew "interrogate" meant "torture." It was one of the more distasteful aspects of her chosen vocation, but needs must as needs must. They had nothing to offer the monsters, and the monsters knew it, so bargaining was out of the question. She took some comfort in the fact that the specimen they'd captured must have been resilient to have resisted them for so long. Not a lot though; the thought of enduring the experience for so long was not something she wanted to dwell on.

Now, the Creature was free, probably recovering on the flesh of some poor soul, and the police were poking questions around a warehouse owned by the Slayers. The only piece of good news was that the Society's business interests were masked by layers and layers of shell companies, dummy corporations, and P.O. boxes registered under false names, so the police wouldn't be showing up to ask Winter uncomfortable questions in the morning. Trying to navigate that labyrinth was well above their pay grade. Still, it was an inconvenience; all this attention meant the Slayers wouldn't be able to use the docks again any time soon.

Winter got out of the car, too tired to carry her bags in with her; she would get them in the morning. Turning off the security system, then re-arming it once she got inside, she tip-toed through the large house. Her legs ached as she climbed the stairs, mentally cursing her family for buying something so large. Finally, she reached her destination: Weiss' room. Gently, Winter cracked the door. Weiss lay in her bed, sound asleep. Her hair down, the covers pulled up to her neck (unusual, wasn't she hot?), her baby sister was the picture of innocence and contentment. An island of hope and serenity in a world that seemed filled with nothing but despair and darkness. Winter gently crept up to her. For a moment, she contemplated pulling down the covers, at least to expose Weiss' neck . . .

But she couldn't; Weiss looked too comfortable. Winter bent down and kissed her sister's forehead, like a mother kissing her child. She promised she would find time for her and Weiss. She wanted it, craved it, and her sister deserved it. The poor thing already had enough to deal with between a dead mother and an absent father. "I love you, Weiss," she whispered, hoping the girl would always know that much at least.

Chapter End Notes

So you like it? I originally planned to have Winter and Weiss talk to each other (each one lying about what really happened over the weekend), but then I went and wrote this scene instead, and it was too precious for me to replace. So, the lying will come later. I also considered having Winter find the bite scar on Weiss' neck and going nuts, but it still feels a little early for that sort of thing. For now, let the sister's enjoy their ignorance of each other's activities. The truth (and the pain) will come later.

I'm sure some of you are wondering why I'm now referring to Pyrrha as a Succubus, when I made a big deal of keeping it a secret in the last chapter. Short version is: it's way too awkward, and I can still build a fun scene involving Weiss finding out about it, so I
went back and changed it in the last chapter. Kudos to Slut_for_Roses for figuring it out.

More new Characters! When will it Stop? I actually had no intention of making the survivor of the Scavs a member of Team CRDL; he was originally supposed to be a wholly original character, but I had a better idea. I admit I never played GRIMM ECLYPSE, so I'm just spit-balling what Merlot's like based on what other fanfic writers have written about him. He actually does have a fairly significant part to play in one or more of the sequels I have planned.

Admissions of Theft: Yes, I stole Merlot's lines about Vampire teeth from Season 2, Episode 3 of SUPERNATURAL, "Bloodlust." It was actually the first episode of the show I ever saw, and the line (along with the unique depiction of Vampire fangs) left an impression on me. I also stole the phrase "berserk lust" from THE DRESDEN FILES, book 5: BLOOD LINES. It's just a fun phrase. Finally, I took "anti-stab vest" from PRIMEVAL, according to Wikipedia, their called "stab-proof vests" or just "stab vests." I just liked the phrase (and how the one Danny wore was concealable and looked more like chainmail, but that's another story). For those wondering why the Slayers don't just wear Kevlar and have protection from guns and claws: bullet-proof vests are designed to stop blunt damage coming from objects without much density and limited propulsion (like a lead bullet fired from a gun); they don't protect you from sharp objects being shoved into you with continuous pressure (like a steel knife held in a person's hand).
"Return to Normalcy" was a speech made by President Warren G. Harding, calling for a return to pre-war society post-World War I. I hope I don't need to explain how that worked out.

Winter didn't unload her car that morning. Although the elder Schnee daughter was accustomed to working long nights, she was still human and needed sleep. As a result, she slept in and had to hurry to get Weiss to school on time for her exam. "I'm sorry, Weiss," she said, for the third time that drive.

"It’s all right," Weiss said, yet again. "How did your meeting go?"

Winter looked both ways at the stop sign, gaining herself a few seconds to think it over. How do you tell your innocent younger sister you successfully terminated a nest of Vampires, saw a man kill himself, told his son that news, and then watched his son swear vengeance? All while you were supposedly on a business trip? “It was all right.”

“That’s nice,” her sister responded.

"How was your weekend?" Winter asked.

Weiss struggled with the question. How do you tell your rational older sister you spent three days hanging out with a Vampire, a Were, a Nix, Whatever Pyrrha Was, and a Black Dog; then joined them on a rescue mission to save their Gumiho friend, only to discover he'd already been rescued by her friends' parents; and finally, spent the last day under the loaded gaze (literally) of the Gumiho's ex-cop adopted mother? And on top of that saw how close your Vampire girlfriend is to an older, prettier Banshee? "Pretty well. I hope we can do it again over the summer."

Winter smiled. "Wonderful. I'm glad to see you coming out of your shell, Weiss. I was worried for a while . . ." She paused. "Weiss, I'm not sure how to tell you this, but . . . Do you know a boy named Cardin Winchester?"

Weiss' eyes narrowed. "I do."

"Oh, that's terrible," Weiss said. She'd spent the past few days in the presence of people with strong, loving relationship with their fathers, so—even though her own was basically a stranger to her, she had an idea of how terrible losing a parent could be. Even Cardin deserved some sympathy.

Winter nodded in agreement. "It is. Weiss, I . . . I've given him a job at the company; he's basically going to be my assistant for a while, so he'll probably be by the house fairly often, all right?"

Weiss grimaced. Then she reminded herself what Cardin was going through. She would force herself to be cordial to him. It was only decent.
"Weiss!" Ruby cried, waving her arm as the white-haired girl approached. The heiress smiled at the sight. She’d missed conversing with her new friends outside the class as she’d done yesterday.

“Ruby,” she answered, casually, walking over to the assembled group who were sitting on a bench half in the sun and half out (Ruby, naturally, was in the shadow). The Vampiress moved over to let Weiss sit down. "How are you this morning?"

The younger girl blushed, swallowing a "better now that you're here" comment. "We're good. Ren's better now, so that's good." Back on the bench, the recently recovered Gumiho nodded and raised his free hand in a wave. The other was tightly gripped by Nora.

"That's good. I, uh . . . I hope your recovery is going well, Ren," Weiss said. What was the protocol for interacting with a friend who was healing from an extended period of being tortured?

"Well enough," Ren replied. "I'm still a little sore, and our parents are looking for a Creature psychologist to help me deal with everything."

"Oh," Weiss said. "That's . . . good."

"It is."

"OUT OF MY WAY!" The entire group turned to watch Cardin Winchester shoving someone out of his way. This was par for the course with Cardin, but for two things. Firstly, the person he was shoving was one of his "friends," Thrush. Secondly, the redhead was scowling worse than anyone had ever seen him before. That was saying something.

"Looks like someone woke up on the wrong side of the bed," Yang said.

"He's going through a . . . bad time," Weiss said. The others turned to her. "My sister mentioned it on the way here . . . his father died over the weekend."

"That sucks."

Blake sighed and nodded. "Agreed."

"He's not the only one who had a bad weekend," Sun said.

Weiss turned to him. "What?"

Sun opened his mouth to reply, but Neptune clapped his hand on Sun's shoulder. He cast a surreptitious gaze around them before whispering. "Creature news flash: apparently, a nest of rogue Vamps was wiped out over the weekend. Looks like SCAV was involved."

"There are those who are blaming Specialists, though," Pyrrha added. "The nest was burned to the ashes."

She and Jaune were holding hands under the table. Weiss couldn't blame them; she shuddered at the thought of what those trained, expert killers could do. A pair of cool fingers laced between hers and squeezed, and the heiress was too grateful to blush.

Winter made it a habit of arriving at school early to snag an open space in the parking lot before the line began. Weiss knew this after four years of high school and so began the walk to her sister’s customary parking spot.

What was not normal were the sounds following after her. Stopping, she turned around and saw
Cardin Winchester following after her. “What are you doing?” she asked.

Cardin’s scowl deepened. “Following you. What does it look like?”

“I can see that,” Weiss remarked. “Why are you following me?”

“Your sister told me to,” he replied.

Weiss attempted to understand what he was saying when Winter came up. "Weiss!" Approaching her sister, Winter grimaced. "I'm sorry I forgot to mention this earlier, Weiss; we'll be looking after Cardin for a while. I'm sorry to you too, Cardin. I'm sure this hassle has been annoying."

Cardin shrugged. "No big deal. Just tell me where I can dump my stuff."

"Right," Winter said. "Very well. Let's go everyone." With that, she turned around and led the way back to the car.

Weiss frowned. She was annoyed that Winter had decided to do this without saying a word to her. Cardin was an arrogant, brat and a bully and sharing a house with him would undoubtedly be less than fun, much less so when Weiss' was still trying to figure out how to tell her older sister she had a girlfriend (and was trying to avoid telling Winter that said girlfriend was a Vampire).

"What's wrong, Rubes?" Yang asked.

Ruby was sprawled on the couch, trying to read her notebook. Thankfully, the couch was pushed up against the wall, at right angles to the windows, thus sparing her the full force of the afternoon sun. "Nothing," she said.

"It's Weiss," Blake explained. "The only time a Creature is this restless is when she's newly in love with her mate."

"Mate?" Yang asked. "You sure, Ruby? Little fast, don't you think? Even for a Creature?"

"I've been watching her for four years," Ruby muttered.

"Yeah, and that isn't creepy at all," Yang said.

"I was watching you for two," Blake said, scooting over to her.

"Eh, that's different," Yang said.

"I'm just worried about her sister," Ruby admitted. "Weiss is living with a murderous psycho, and she doesn't even know it! And there's nothing we can do about it!"

"I wouldn't worry about it Rubes," Yang said. "How much trouble could she be?"

Winter pulled into the garage. "Cardin, I'll show you to your room," she said, unbuckling. The teen grunted. "Weiss, will you be all right on your own for a while?"

"Yes," the heiress replied, trying to keep the disappointment out of her voice. How strange that after only a few days, she missed the energetic, vocal chaos that had filled her study sessions with her friends.

Winter and Cardin climbed out of the car and strode into the house. Cardin marched after her with
his backpack in hand. Had he already brought his things over? Then why did he need to be shown his room? Weiss shrugged the question off. It was none of her business. Maybe Cardin just needed to be alone. It was still strange to feel so bad for the bully, but . . .

As she was climbing out of the car, Weiss' eyes landed on her sister's bags still in the back. Deciding that since she had nothing aside from her almost-empty backpack to carry in, she might as well help Winter get her bags in. Her sister must have had a worse weekend than Weiss had thought if her bags hadn't been unpacked and put away yet.

Weiss grabbed the garment bag first. Clang! Weiss froze. Why did her sister's bag make a metallic sound? And why was it so heavy? She debated with herself for a few moments before pulling the zipper down and peaking inside. The clothes within weren't lying flat on the bed of the car. She lifted the suit up and froze as she cut her hand on a sharp piece of metal. Weiss' eyes went wide. Yanking the rest of the suit up, she saw two sabers secured within the bag. What the heck? she thought. Since when did Winter bring weapons with her when she went out of town? Weiss looked at her hand again. Real weapons, no less. Sharpened.

What the heck had Winter been doing for the past few days?

Chapter End Notes

I’m sorry there isn’t more stuff going on, given how long it took me to update, but this is how my mind works. Hopefully, the next chapter will come sooner.
Surprise

Chapter Notes

Hey, all! I'm back. By the way, I've started a new story (because I'm completely insane and don't think three on-going stories plus thesis work is quite enough to do!)! It's called DC Barsoom and is a mash-up of DC superheroes like Superman and Edgar Rice Burroughs' BARSOOM stories (and whatever other sci-fi franchise I want), starring baby Clark Kent being sent to Mars to avoid the destruction of Earth, where he is adopted by Jor El and Lara and develops superhuman abilities because of Mars' lighter gravity. Oh! And everyone's naked because that is the number one thing to stick in your mind about the BARSOOM stories!

Also, thanks everyone for 100+ kudos. It makes me feel like I'm actually doing something worthwhile here.

Weiss didn’t say anything to Winter about the swords. In fact, she hardly spoke to her older sister at all that night; Winter was too busy helping Cardin settle in. Normally, Weiss would’ve been annoyed that this newcomer was taking so much of her sister’s attention away from her, but right now she was too distracted by her own concerns to care. Why had Winter packed actual swords? Why had she hidden them? Did they have something to do with Cardin's sudden arrival? With his father's death?

Weiss’ dreams that night were awful. She dreamed of her sister wielding those swords, cutting up her friends, ignoring their pleas for mercy. Weiss was startled to wakefulness after watching her sister, covered with blood and wearing a cold, unfeeling expression, lop Ruby’s head off. The heiress turned over and looked st the clock. 2:15 a.m. It was going to be a very long night.

Weiss knew she couldn’t go back to sleep any time soon. Instead, she decided to make a snack and study some more. She only had one exam left after all, and she wanted to do well on it. That would take her mind off her fears that her sister was plotting to murder her friends.

Weiss snuck out of her room and crept down the hall. She didn’t want to wake anyone else up.

"Why arent you telling her?"

Weiss stopped. The voice came from behind the closed door. There were no lights on inside the room. It sounded like Cardin.

"I'm trying to keep all this a secret from her.”

Weiss’ heart jumped. That sounded like Winter.

"Why?” Cardin asked “Isn’t this ‘the family business?’” The way he spoke told Weiss he’d heard that phrase many times in his life and had grown to hate it.

"No,” Winter replied. “It’s the business I do for my family, to make sure Weiss stays safe and happy. If she knew what was out there . . ."
“The monsters,” Cardin said.

"Yes, the monsters. If Weiss knew about them . . .”

The pair continued talking but Weiss didn’t hear any of it. She ducted back into her room and hid under her blankets. What were they talking about? Were they talking about Creatures? Was Winter a Scav? A specialist?

“Weiss, are you all right?” Ruby asked.

Her girlfriend jumped as the younger girl walked up to her. One look at her told Ruby that it wasn't her Vampire stealth abilities that had taken the heiress by surprise. No, Weiss looked like she hadn't slept at all last night. It was shocking given how much the heiress valued her grades. Her girlfriend had deep circles under her eyes, and was shaking like a Chihuahua. She looked like a light breeze would knock her over. Or a harsh word would send her running for the hills.

Weiss didn't speak. Instead, she threw her arms around Ruby's neck and hugged her close, completely forgetting Blake's warnings to always keep her neck away from Ruby's face.

Ruby was so shocked that her instincts kicked in before she realized what they were doing. The young Vampiress immediately locked her arms around Weiss' waist, trapping her in her superhuman grip. Her fangs descended, but by then, Ruby's conscious mind was aware of what she was doing and tried to reassert control of her own body. The young Vampire was fighting to pull her fangs back in when she smelled salt. It confused her for a moment before she also noticed the wetness against her neck and shoulder.

Weiss was crying.

Once again, Ruby succumbed to her instincts. Her arms tightened their grip, pulled Weiss even closer to her, and her fangs came back down. She stood rooted to the spot; it was all she could do not to run off, to hunt down and rip to shreds whoever or whatever was making her mate cry. Despite this, her right hand came up and gently stroked Weiss' hair, letting Weiss know she wasn't alone. That she had a mate who cared for her.

"Ruby? Is everything OK?" a voice behind her asked. Ruby reacted immediately, spinning her head around, her body staying between Weiss and the newcomer. She drew back her lips, showing her fangs, and letting out a snarl. Stay away, she was saying.

And Yang got the message, because it was Yang who had spoken. Yang who stepped back at her actions. That was enough to make the young Creature calm down. Her own sister was afraid of her . . .

Thankfully, Blake stepped up. "Calm down, young one," she instructed. Her eyes took on a golden tinge, her own inner predator challenging Ruby's. Already dealing with her own guilt, the Vampire was no match for her. She drew in her fangs, wilting under the Were's look.

"I'm sorry," Ruby whispered. She missed how Weiss had stopped crying and had looked up. Now once again aware of the world around her, she stared confused at her friends.

"It's OK, Rubes," Yang said. "Let's go sit down; we got a minute or two to kill before it's time for the exam."

"Actually, we have about ten minutes," Blake said.
The four moved over to the picnic tables, far away from the milling students. Weiss was initially reluctant to speak about what bothered her, but eventually she broke down. She told about the swords she'd found in her sister's bag, the nightmares, and the conversation she'd overheard between her sister and Cardin. "My sister's a serial killer," she whispered. "A racist. A bigot. A, a Nazi!"

"That might be a bit extreme," Blake drawled, though secretly she was glad her sister-in-law (or custom or whatever)'s prospective mate had taken such a hard stance against the practices and attitudes of their people's enemies.

"She kills people for being different from her. What else should I call her?" Weiss asked. This was horrible. Winter was the one who had raised her. She was the mother Weiss had never gotten to know. If she was secretly some kind of monster . . .

"Does she?" Ruby asked. "I mean, do we know for sure that she's a Creature killer?"

"She's hiding swords in her bags, Sis," Yang said. "I don't see what else she could've been doing."

"Maybe she's a vigilante," Ruby said. "And she was talking to Cardin about gangsters and mass murderers and rapists and stuff."

"That seems like a stretch," Blake said.

"But it's not impossible," Ruby insisted. Turning to Weiss, she said. "You can't just give up on her, Weiss. She's your sister."

Weiss' heartbeat sped up, as her mind latched onto the thin strand of hope like a castaway grabbed the rope the sailors still on ship threw down after her. "You're right, Ruby," Weiss said. "We need proof. What should we do?"

Blake shrugged. "The easiest thing to do would be to look around the house for something incrimidating. Weapons, mission reports, or some such."

"So . . . spy mission, anyone?" Yang asked. "We go to Weiss' place after school and snoop around for whatever."

"That's a terrible idea, Yang," Weiss said.

"That's an awesome idea!" Ruby argued.

"Do you have a better one, Weiss?" Blake asked. "You wouldn't know what to look for, so you can't look on your own."

Weiss frowned, but admitted to the logic in the statement. "All right. We have five minutes before the exam starts to make a plan. Any ideas?"

The plan four came up with was simple but effective. Weiss sent a text to her sister asking to hang out with Ruby and company after the last exam. Winter sent back a message that said that was a great idea, in fact, she'd asked Weiss about it as she'd driven Weiss and Cardin to school. Weiss realized she'd been so caught up in her concerns the night before that she'd missed that conversation. So, she hurriedly sent back a text saying she'd been too concerned with the last exam to pay attention. Winter seemed to by it, and that was that. She'd be out of the house for a while anyway, needing to take Cardin shopping for new clothes and such as apparently he and his father had been living out of suitcases for a while.
"That's pretty sad," Yang said.

"I wonder why they lived like that," Blake mused.

"Who cares?" Ruby asked. "We can walk around the house without anyone else. Let's go look around!" She was practically bouncing in her seat. The four were in Yang's jeep, driving not to lunch but to the Schnee family home. It was the first time Weiss had taken anyone to her house, and she was . . . nervous about it.

"This is your house?" Yang asked as she pulled up to the gates. "It's a mansion!"

"No, just big," Weiss said, feeling her cheeks heat up. She told Yang the code to the gate, allowing the four to drive up to the front gate. Once there, Weiss led them through the house. It was hard, as Yang and Ruby kept wanting to stop and sight-see. Weiss was equal parts frustrated at how easily distracted they were and strangely proud the sisters were so impressed. Maybe she should have brought people here before? If only she'd been able to make friends before now.

Thankfully, they had Blake to keep them all in line, gently pushing the others along which reminded Weiss they needed to keep going. At last, they ascended the stairs and walked down the hall. Ruby instinctively turned towards Weiss' room, but Blake grabbed her arm and whispered "not now," and the Vampire blushed before falling back into line. The four reached their destination.

"This is Winter's room," Weiss said. She opened the door, leading the group in. "What she we look for?"

Ruby shrugged. "I don't know. If she's a scav, I'd expect garlic and silver bullets and crosses. I have no idea what to look for if she's a Specialist."

"Secret communication devices, perhaps?" Yang offered.

"Like a giant computer screen?" Ruby asked.

"Why would anyone need that when they can just use their regular laptop?" Weiss asked. "Or her cell phone?"

"Paranoia?" Blake offered. "To keep you from finding it. Anyway, why don't you try to snoop through her computer while we look around the room.

Weiss made a face. "All right," she said and went to work.

All four young women had their tasks, Ruby going through Winter’s dresser, Yang checking her medicine cabinet, and Blake looking under the mattress and going through her closet. Meanwhile, Weiss sat down in front of her sister's desk, feeling horrible. Snooping through her sister's computer? This was the sort of thing suspicious parents did to their children. It was a massive invasion of privacy. It was also bizarrely ironic, given how Winter was essentially the closest thing she knew to a parent. Snooping her sister's internet history was also uncomfortable, but as she sat in front of her sister's desk and its laptop, she knew she'd have to. If she could only guess the password. She sat staring at the little white rectangle. She knew Winter better than anyone, so what would her sister use as a password? Letting out a little laugh, she typed "weiss" into the box. That was probably too obvious, but given how close they were it seemed like something Winter would at least consider--

Her sister's desktop lay open before her.

Weiss choked. Her sister loved her so much. How could she doubt her? Yes, Winter had her
problems, but she was also the one who'd raised Weiss, who'd helped instill her sense of integrity and responsibility. She shouldn't be doing this. They should all leave. Her friends would understand, right?

"Guys. You should come see this," Blake said from the closet.

"What is it?" Yang asked.

"Come see."

The other three walked over to the walk-in structure. Ruby drifted to Weiss' side as the heiress swallowed uncomfortably. It was cramped, but they all fit in. And they all saw what Blake had found. It was an indent in the wall, and within that indent were weapons. Swords, guns, knives, ammunition, and more. Weiss was no expert, but she was certain at least some of it was illegal to own.

There were also cabinets of chemicals. Blake took a whiff and backed away, despite the seal on the bottles. "Sulphate," she whispered, a hiss.

Yang grabbed her and dragged the dark-haired girl out. "That's toxic to Weres," she said.

Ruby gripped Weiss' hand, but Weiss didn't feel it. She didn't feel anything, except her world shattering around her as the most stable and reliable person in her life, the foundation that held it all up, was forever broken and lost.

Chapter End Notes

So . . . yeah, Weiss is having a bad day.

The weapons come from NBC's GRIMM. Yeah, its a cabinet not a cubbyhole in the wall, but you gotta admit it gets the point across.
Weiss and the others met up in the Rose/Xiao-Long residence. The assembled collection of Creatures and Humans were not as exuberant as they should have been given they’d just graduated high school (well, they hadn’t gone through graduation yet, but they were finished with finals and that close enough). Instead, there were looks of glumness, concern, and anger on their faces as they cuddled in small groups.

Ren was lying on the couch with his head on Nora's lap. Pyrrha and Jaune sat on the end of the couch, next to the Gumiho's feet. Yang and Blake “meanwhile sat in a chair, Blake sitting—or rather, lounging—in Yang’s lap. The rest of them were sitting on pillows on the floor. Sun and Neptune were sitting together as were Darg and a pretty, white-haired young woman who introduced herself as Ban.

Weiss found herself on the loveseat, hugged from behind by Ruby. It was more intimate than what she was used to and was probably not very safe given what Blake had said about Vampire instincts, but she didn't mind. In fact, laying with her head rested against Ruby's breasts as the younger woman petted her head, she couldn't help but want to be closer. The heiress wasn't sobbing, but her eyes continued to leak steady tears. One of Ruby's arms was wrapped around Weiss' torso, and the white-haired girl grasped the forearm and hand in her own hands.

"How much longer?" Weiss asked.

Blake answered, "They'll tell us when they feel like it. There's no way to speed it up."

Weiss sighed and shifted, absent-mindedly snuggling deeper into Ruby's embrace. "Don't worry, Weiss," the Vampiress whispered. "I'm sure it'll be OK."

"OK? OK?" Weiss shot up and looked Ruby in the eye. "My sister is a homicidal racist! She's part of the same group that tortured Ren—"

"We don't actually know that," said Gumiho interrupted. Weiss ignored him.

"She's probably killed Creatures herself! How can it be all right? They'll kill her!"

"You don't know that for sure!" Jaune said.

"Of course I do! They can't send her to the police, and they can't let her keep killing! And even if they could, why would they want to? She's killed who knows how many people, or helped kill them! Everyone will want her to die! Heck, part of me wants her to!"

"Weiss!" Ruby cried.

Weiss ignored her and stomped out of the room. She went out the door and sat down on the front
port of the small house. She sat down on the steps and put her head in her hands. It was dark out; the street lights had just come on, and the sky above was a lovely navy that Weiss wasn't in the mood to admire. Winter had been perfectly happy to give her permission to have a sleepover with her friends. I wonder if she's using this time to train Cardin to kill people.

"Ruff! Ruff!" Weiss looked down and saw Zwei had followed her out. The Black Dog wriggled into her lap and nuzzled into her chest. Weiss sighed and wrapped her arms around him. She heard the door open behind her. She ignored it.

"Weiss?" It was Pyrrha. "Are you all right?"

"... No . . ."

Pyrrha sat down beside her. "Do you really want your sister to die, Weiss?"

"No. Yes. No-dang it!" Weiss cried. "I don't know what to think. My sister raised me. She's the parent I know; Father is always away, and my mother died years ago. Even when she was alive, she was no condition to parent me. Winter has been all the family I've ever known. I've looked up to her as a role model for my entire life. Now, I find out, she's basically a Nazi or a Klansman, -woman. She's killed or help kill I don't know how many people. And . . ."

Pyrrha sighed. "I understand that Weiss, but . . . she's still your sister."

"And your mom." Weiss and Pyrrha looked up to see Yang had come out onto the porch with them. "Weiss . . . I know what it's like to find out that someone you love . . . that they have secrets. Things they've been keeping from you because they don't want you knowing. And, yeah, it's tough. It can make you look at them differently. But, Weiss, the thing is, they aren't looking at you differently."

"What?" the heiress asked.

"I mean, all this stuff, yeah, it's bad, but it doesn't erase everything your sister did for you. You say she loved you and raised you. She still did. I mean—and don't you dare ever tell Ruby said this—it's tough to raise a younger sister because your Mom's gone. And your Dad isn't available." Yang shook her head. "Believe me, that takes a lot of love."

Weiss hung her head. "You're right."

"Besides," Pyrrha said, cautiously, "we still don't know definitively that Winter has killed an innocent; that nest of Vampires were pretty bad."

"And people can change," Yang said, her voice devoid of mirth. It was the most serious thing she'd ever heard the blonde say. "Now get back inside; Ruby's upset."

Weiss got up and walked back into the house. When she got to the living room, she saw the mess she'd made of things. Ruby was sitting in the middle of a group hug, with Dearg and Blake closest. Weiss couldn't help but frown at the sight of the other redhead . . . until Dear lifted her head and scowled at her. Weiss deflated; she had no right to be angry because someone else was a better friend, and better girlfriend material, than herself.

Ruby lifted her head and made eye contact with her. She wasn't crying, but Weiss wanted to cry at the look of betrayal on her face. Ruby stood up from the cuddle, and Weiss tried to think of something to say. But she couldn't. What could she say to make up for this . . . revelation of her own failings? Of her own vindictiveness and bitterness?
It turned out, she didn't have to say anything. Ruby walked up to her and enveloped her in a fierce hug. Weiss instinctively returned the embrace, and finally found the words for the feeling she wanted to convey to Ruby. "I'm sorry," she whispered. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry . . ."

While the teens were discussing the situation in the Xiao-Long/Rose/Branwen home, their parents and guardians were having a similar discussion a couple miles away, in the back room of a bar that had closed early for "repairs."

So how do we deal with her?" Heather asked. She was addressing her husband, Qrow, Tai, and three other people: Maria Vasiliadis and Proserpina and Pluto Nikos. The Belladonnas had warned they’d arrive late, and the Pléimionns . . . had not been invited.

"I say we grab her and the kid and beat them until they talk," Maria suggested. Blue-eyed and blonde, she looked more worthy of the name "Valkyrie" than the two Humans, especially with the scowl she currently wore.

"Yeesh, I thought Qrow was the bloodthirsty one," Tai mumbled.

"It’s not bloodthirsty; it’s pragmatic," the woman snapped.

"Only if you don’t mind committing war crimes," a man with dark red hair countered.

Beside him, a black-haired, green-eyed woman supported him. “There isn’t a lot point to surviving if we lose our souls in the process.”

"Amen, sister," Cole Valkyrie whispered, shaking his head to shake off old memories.

The blonde woman scowled. “Just sitting here is probably enough to get you both disbarred, Proserpina.”

The red-haired, green-eyed woman (practically a mirror of her daughter), Proserpina Nikos, shrugged. “I'm fairly certain some of the meetings I’ve sat in on, Maria, are enough to get me arrested. I’m not terribly concerned about needing a new job.”

Beside her, her husband (a fiendishly handsome black-haired and black-eyed man) nodded in agreement. “Those are the chances we all take to live in this world.”

"I suggest we watch her until we know where their base is," Cole suggested, getting everyone back on topic. “That place on the south side wasn’t kitted out to serve as a true headquarters. They may have something more permanent hidden somewhere.”

"And once we find it, we go in guns blazing?” his wife asked.
“That’ll be suicide,” Qrow said. The Vampire took a swig from his hip flask, which contained a mix of blood and whiskey. “Judging by the gear Ms. Schnee has in her closet and what the losers at the warehouse had, I think I know what outfit she’s working with.” He took another drink. “They’ll have a local base, yeah, but it won’t just be some shack they use to store their guns and maps and stuff. The place will be a fortress; designed to withstand assault from guns and Creature powers alike. We try anything short of an air strike—heck, I’m not even sure that’d work.”

Tai sighed. “So what? The only way to get them to leave is to go nuclear?”

”That sounds like something I should prevent,” a voice rumbled from the door.

The door swung open to reveal a large man with a man of black hair and a beard to rival Cole’s, but the color was much darker, and the man’s eyes were a fierce hazel that bordered on gold. Beside him walked a much shorter woman with hair cropped shorter and dressed in a professional black suit both had a slight Asian cast to their features.

”Ghira. Kali,” Qrow said. “Welcome to the party.”

”You’re later than you said you’d be,” Maria reproached.

”An incident came over dispatch. I had to deal with it.”

”One thing I don’t regret about switching from being a cop to being a PI,” Heather said. “When I say the day is over; it’s over.”

”If that’s the only advantage you see, be glad you never made captain,” Kali said, patting her husband’s arm.

”So what are we dealing with?” Ghira asked, sinking into a chair. “You said something about the Specialists.”

Tai sighed. “Yeah, funny story: my daughter’s new girlfriend’s big sister is one of them.”


Tai and Qrow repeated the story to the newcomers. Qrow also showed the picture Yang had taken and sent him of the weapons closet. Ghira turned to his wife. “Remind me to ground Blake when we get home.”

Kali rubbed her eyes. Examining the picture, she asked, “Is any of this illegal to own?”

Ghira took the phone back, looked the image over, but Proserpina was the one who answered. “No. As long as she’s registered all of them, then they’re all legal to own.”

Ghira sighed. “I’ll order a check, but I doubt we’ll be that lucky.”

”Got to love living in the South,” Qrow muttered.

”Arresting one of them wouldn’t solve the problem,” Heather remarked, and her husband nodded.

”More likely, it’ll just alert the rest that we’re on to them, and they’ll start poking around,” the big man said.

“If we grab her and the boy, we can make them talk,” Maria suggested.

”Disregarding all the issues with abductions,” Ghira remarked, “I don’t know that it’d any good.
The boy isn’t likely to know anything of value—we can’t even be certain he’s even to their HQ. As for the woman, these people are fanatics; she’d die before she squealed on her friends.”

"Everyone has their breaking point,” Maria said.

"You’re not talking about torture, are you?” the police captain asked.

"She is," Cole said. "The rest of us have been trying to talk her down from that strategy for the past hour or so.”

“I’m not burying Neptune,” Maria said. “I’ve already lost a mate to these people. Tai may have lost two, and your boy,” she pointed at the Valkyries “lost both parents. These . . . people have no mercy and no limits. If we’re going to survive, neither should we!”

Taiyang shook his head. “No. I’m sorry, but no. I want to be able to look my girls in the eye when all this is over.”

"Agreed," Proserpina said.

Heather grunted. "Not to mention that if we do something like that, it'll only give the bigots more ammunition to use against us, right?"

Her husband agreed. "There's a reason there are rules of war. For your own psychological well-being, and to keep the other side from being able to paint you as a monster."

"They already think we're monsters!” Maria spat. "You think we can change that?"

Kali grimaced. "I don't agree with the torture, but I admit, there isn't much chance we can change their minds."

"That isn't the point," Qrow spoke up. "If we go there, if we allow ourselves to think we can do whatever we want to them because of what they are, we become what they are."

Maria snorted. "They won't give us that curtsey."

"Which isn't justification," Pluto said.

"Proserpina shook her head. "Backing up, I think Cole had the right idea: we follow those two and find out where their base is and who their members are."

"I thought we agreed we couldn't take them on," Tai said.

"It might still be helpful," Kali said. "At least we'll know who to be wary of."

"It's better than nothing," Maria said.

The group organized the matter as well as they could. Obviously, following their quarry 24/7 would be nigh-impossible, but they could do their best. The meeting broke up around midnight, and Qrow and Tai got into the car together to go home. As they were driving Tai turned to him and asked a question that had been bothering him since the meeting. It was one he couldn’t ask in front of the others because it was top-secret, classified type information. The kind he wasn’t supposed to know. Neither was Qrow, for that matter.

"What about Ozpin and his buddies?" the blonde asked. "They're Human, they could sneak in and —"
"Forget it," Qrow said. "They won't get involved."

Tai grunted. "Yeah, they're called 'The Watchers,' not 'The Doers.'"

"They do things," his brother-in-law corrected. "They cleaned up that mess we made of the southside last week. But they won't get violent. They're historians, Tai, not soldiers."

"They have guards, don't they?"

“I’m sure Cole would say that guards aren’t soldiers. Besides, the Watchers consider Specialists as much a part of the preternatural world as the rest of us,” Qrow said. “And since they won’t take sides in a conflict . . .”

"They won't help," Tai finished. "Crap."

"Yeah," Qrow muttered. “We’re on our own, I’m afraid.”

Chapter End Notes

Short but sweet. Sorry it isn't longer after the wait, but I hope the emotional stuff makes up for it.

I expect that some of you might think that Ruby’s reaction to Weiss’ statement is too much (and some of you might think Weiss’ reaction was too much, but I think she defended her own reasoning well enough). Remember that Ruby has a very strong relationship with Yang, so the idea that Weiss might wish her own big sister dead is kind of a shock to her systems. In addition to her just being a nice person in general.

Yes, Proserpina and Pluto are named after the Roman names of Persephone and Hades. I want to keep following the color-naming rule, and spring time is associated with green (the color of Pyrrha’s eyes) and thought of the classical goddess of spring. Once I had that, naming her husband after her namesake’s spouse was pretty easy. Maria’s name is derived from the Latin word for “sea.”

For those who haven't gotten it, Ozpin's Watchers are based off the ones in HIGHLANDER and the Cleaners from UNDERWORLD II.

I dropped a couple more hints about Qrow's backstory here. I wonder if anyone's seen them.
Chapter Notes

Warning! Stand by for angst! And lemon!

I originally thought this would have to be two chapters, but I had too much fun with the second half that it became one. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

"Good morning, Weiss," Winter said as her sister walked into the kitchen. The elder Schnee was sitting at the table, enjoying the remains her homemade breakfast of toast, bacon, fruit, and coffee.

At the counter, Cardin had his eyes glued to the inside of the toaster. Probably trying to make sure his waffles didn’t burn. Winter wondered if he’d ever actually cooked anything outside of a microwave, given how he’d grown up in motel rooms. That was probably something she needed to add to the lessons.


Winter looked at her. Weiss was . . . Quiet was the first word that came to Winter’s mind. Not that Weiss was often loud or exuberant, but she seemed much more subdued than normal, her movements stiffer somehow as she ignored the bacon Winter had left on the counter and simply poured herself some cereal.

Maybe she hadn’t slept well, Winter thought. She opened her mouth to ask, but Cardin cut her off before she even began.

"Winter," he said, as he brought his plate to the table. In addition to the waffles, he’d help himself to the remaining strips of bacon. “What’s the plan for today?”

Winter stared at him. On the one hand, she was peeved at the presumptive young man. On the other, she had promised his father she would train him. On the other, other hand, she hadn’t spent much time with Weiss lately . . .

“I’m still tired,” Weiss announced, putting her spoon down. She’d finished her cereal almost as quickly as she’d poured it. “I think I’ll go back to bed for a while.”

“Are you sure?” Winter asked. “You’ve hardly eaten anything.”

“I’m certain,” Weiss replied. The heiress rose, rinsed of her dishes, and deposited them in the dishwasher. Then she walked out without another word.

Winter watched her sister’s departure. For someone who claimed to be tired, Weiss was moving awfully fast . . .

“I just . . . I don’t know how to act around her anymore,” Weiss whined into the phone.

"I know, Weiss," Ruby answered. “I can’t imagine finding out something so terrible about my
Weiss sighed. “The worst part is, she doesn’t seem to be acting any differently. She looks and acts like the same Winter she was before.”

“Well, why shouldn’t she?” the Vampire asked. “I mean, who knows how many years she’s been doing this without you knowing.”

“Thanks, Ruby,” Weiss said. “Now, I feel even more like an idiot for not noticing it earlier.”

“I’m sorry,” Ruby whispered.

“No, I’m sorry,” Weiss said. “This isn’t your fault.”

“If it makes you feel any better,” Ruby said, “I heard that a lot of serial killers and assassins are really good at blending in with normal people.”

The heiress groaned. “No Ruby. Strangely, that doesn’t help.”

“Oh.”

Weiss sighed. “Ruby . . . What are we going to do? Winter is a Creature-targeting serial killer, and she’s apparently teaching Cardin to be the same.”

Ruby sighed. “I don’t know, Weiss. I know Dad and Uncle Qrow are working on it with the other leaders of our community.”

Weiss thought for a moment. “Ruby, how does this whole . . . How do Creatures govern themselves?”

“Well, we all agreed to a set of rules, the . . . Something-something Codex. I can’t pronounce the name.”

“And who enforces the rules,” Weiss asked.

“Well, most of us don’t want to cause trouble, so there’s not a lot of need for a real police for Creatures. Usually, when someone breaks the rules, the rest of the Creature community takes them down. Or hunters find them and kill them.”

“You said usually. What happens when that isn’t good enough?”

“Yooooooouuuuuuuuuuu don’t want to know,” Ruby said. “Trust me; it’s bad.”

“Why not could they help us?” Weiss asked.

“Not!” Ruby yelled. “Listen, Weiss . . . The Council . . . They don’t play nice. They’re dangerous. Like, the desperate measures desperate times call for. You get what I mean?”

Weiss tried to parce the Vampire’s last paragraph. “I think so. Calling in this ‘Council’ could cause more problems than it solves.”

“Yeah,” Ruby said, her voice quiet and subdued. After a moment, she spoke again, the usual brightness back again. “Hey, Weiss, are you planning anything Monday afternoon?”

“No,” Weiss replied.
“Want to . . . Go out?” Ruby asked.

A warm flush graced the pale Human’s face. “I’d like that,” she replied. “Do you have any ideas?”

“Well, there’s Beach Street,” Ruby said. “Or the zoo; although the animals don’t like me much.”

Weiss smiled. “Beach Street sounds nice,” she replied. She was familiar with the small section of town, just outside of the busy downtown area, bordering a park, and beyond that was on the water. It was actually a very good choice for a first date. Her blush returned even fiercer.

“A first date.

“Ruby finally asked the Ice Queen out!” Yang announced with a huge smile as she opened the door for Pyrrha. “She’s taking her to Beach Street on Monday!”

“That’s a lovely idea,” Pyrrha said. “We all go there fairly regularly, so she can ask any of us for which shops or restaurants to stop by.” She paused and eyed Yang suspiciously. “Did you suggest it?” she asked.

“Nope!” Yang declared proudly. “Baby Sis thought it up all on her own!”

Blake came up behind her. “Didn’t we go to Beach Street on our fist date?” She asked.

“Eh, doesn’t count,” Yang said. “She still picked it out of all the other stuff she’s heard the rest of us do.”

The Were snorted. “That’s quite a varied bag. Speaking of, maybe we should let Pyrrha in.”

“Right,” the blonde said. She stepped back and let Pyrrha in. The Succubus carried an overnight bag with her. After her “conversation” with Dearg the week, she was again feeding properly, which meant regularly spending afternoons or nights with her “closest” friends.

The couple led her back into the guest room. As much as the whole family loved and accepted Pyrrha, it would still be awkward to have a threesome in the room Yang shared with Ruby. Besides, the bunk beds were cramped enough with just two people. A third person wouldn’t be able to fit, much less perform complicated carnal interludes. By contrast, the bed in the guest room was queen-sized and could comfortably fit all three (and perhaps one or two more).

Pyrrha set her bag down beside the bed without looking at it. Instead, she was more interested in the mattress. She ran her hand over the comforter, feeling the left over feelings of passion and affection and contentment that remained trapped within the fibers. She felt things low in her body warm up.

These actions didn’t go unnoticed by the other two women in the room. "Hungry already, Pyrrha?" Yang asked.

“It must be the stress of the past few days,” the Succubus replied. Physical or emotional strain can do that.”

"You don’t look particularly strained,” Blake noted. "In fact, you look radiant."

It was true; Pyrrha was almost glowing. She looked down at the ring on her finger. “I just feel . . . Good.”

"I’ll bet,” The Were grinned.

"And we’re gonna make you feel even better,” Yang said, smiling.
Even as the blonde walked up to her, a hungry look on her face, even as her own body reacted in kind, Pyrrha couldn't help but express surprise. "Wha-now?" she asked.

"Is that a problem?" Blake asked, circling behind her mate. She had already shut the door while Pyrrha had been preoccupied with the Human member of the trio.

"No," Pyrrha said, as Yang wrapped her arms around her. Her own arms instinctively came up and held her friend closer.

"Good," the blonde said. And then, she kissed the redhead.

Pyrrha moaned into the kiss. Her hands began to roam over Yang’s generous curves. Over hips, buttocks, thighs, and breasts. Yang moaned breaking the kiss, and Pyrrha opened her eyes to reveal dilated pupils.

“You are hungry,” Blake said, as she came up beside Pyrrha. The Succubus made a pleasant, predatory sound. Her left arm let go of Yang and pulled Blake into her, capturing the Were’s lips in a kiss. Yang also wrapped an arm around her mate.


The trio toppled over onto the bed and began stripping themselves and each other. The Succubus paused, spending a moment to drink in the sight of her lovers’ bare forms. The two ignored her and leaned in for a gentle, but passionate kiss.

Pyrrha pounced onto them. She kissed both deeply, swapping between them, moving down their jaws, necks, collars and breasts, before diving down and latching onto Yang’s nipple. Her hands reached down to up her firm ass.

The blonde moaned and brought her hand up to hold the redhead’s head in place. Blake bent down and began lapping and nibbling at Pyrrha’s boobs, her hand reaching up to tease Yang’s unattended tit.

Pyrrha lifted her head and pushed Blake down, attacking her breasts now. Placing little bites all over their surfaces, pinching the nipples with her teeth.

The now freed Yang crawled behind the Succubus, pushing her thighs apart and began eating her out.

Pyrrha moaned against Blake’s skin and thrust her hips back against Yang’s mouth. The blonde continued exploring her crevice with her tongue. Blake, seeing opportunity brought her hands up and began caressing Pyrrha’s breasts. The Succubus let out a whine at the sensations, especially when Yang reached out with her finger and began to tease her clit.

Pyrrha came hard, and Yang lapped it up eagerly. Soon enough, though, her lover had recovered enough to turn and leap at her, pinning her to the mattress. Pyrrha covered her face with kisses, not at all complaining that she was licking up her own orgasm. Once she’d cleaned Yang’s face, she kissed down to her breasts, then her tummy, then the shaven folds of her crotch.

Pyrrha ate her out, quite literally considering what she was. Without preamble, she plunged her tongue in between Yang’s nether lips, her mouth fastening onto her labia. Yang threw back her head and moaned at the sensations. She and Blake weren’t really the kind of couple to bring someone else to bed (she didn’t think); they made an exception for Pyrrha because of her needs. But WOW, it was a sacrifice that paid for itself in some ways. Seemingly not to be left out, Blake settled down next to
her, wrapping one arm around her and kissing her. The Were’s other hand was between her legs, index and middle fingers thrusting in and out of her pussy.

Yang moaned again as she came; Pyrrha’s licking actually increased as she hungrily devoured her release, prolonging the sensations. Beside her, Blake growled a little.

Pyrrha raised her head from between Yang’s thighs and looked at the Were. Blake’s fingers had ceased their ministrations, and she was panting almost as heavily as Yang. She held up the digits; they were soaked with her fluids. Pyrrha crawled over to her and took the offered fingers into her mouth, sucking on them as though she were giving them a blow job. Releasing them, the Were and the Succubus locked eyes.

Pyrrha wasn’t finished just yet.

That night, Winter stood before Weiss’ door. Not doing anything, just standing there. What was wrong with her? She was an experienced Slayer and business woman. She had faced down and conquered Vampires, Djinn, Ghouls, and lawyers, but she couldn’t bring herself to knock on her little sister’s door?

Except, Weiss wasn’t a monster to be slain. She was Winter's baby sister and, well, Winter had messed up. Weiss had been avoiding her since breakfast—sneaking down for lunch on her own and only reluctantly joining them for dinner, during which she'd hardly said a word. Winter mentally kicked herself. This was her own fault; she'd brought a near-stranger into their house and had been so focused on him that she hadn't had much time left for Weiss. Idiot. Weiss was her sister; she always came first.

“Weiss, can we talk?” Winter said, finally knocking. Even as she asked, she was opening the door. She didn't know how she was going to fix this, but she might as well start with an apology.

"In a minute!” Weiss replied her back to the door. She was pulling her nightgown over her head. White silk, of course. Weiss pulled her hair out of the neckline of the dress, briefly exposing the skin of her throat, and that was when everything fell apart.

"Weiss!” the elder Schnee cried. Weiss jumped at the mention of her name. She turned with wide eyes as Winter crossed the room. Winter grabbed Weiss by the arm with one hand and shoved her hair out of the way with the other. But she knew what to expect.

The scars. Scars on Weiss’ neck. Scars Winter knew all too well from years of hunting Vampires . . .

"Where did you get these?” She asked. “And when?”

"Let me go!” Weiss said. She struggled to escape Winter's hold, but the older woman only held on tighter.

"Answer the question!” Winter ordered. Her mind was flashing one horrible image after another to her. How had she missed this?

"Winter, you’re hurting me!”

"Fuck, Weiss!” The heiress’ eyes widened further. Winter had never sworn in front of her before, but right now, she didn't care. “Where did you meet a Vampire?”

Maybe it was the way she was gripping Weiss’ arm, but it seemed the younger woman’s self-defense
training took over. Training Winter had insisted she attend. Her free hand snaked out, and struck her sister’s throat with the web between her thumb and index finger. Winter gagged and let go of her sister’s arm. Weiss dashed around her and out the door.

Weiss instinctively grabbed her wallet, keys, and cell phone off the nightside table as she ran out. Years of habit now thankfully making her hurried escape a little easier. And she had to escape, had to warn Ruby and the others. How could she have been so careless? Why hadn’t she dressed in the bathroom or something? It would have been so simple!

As she raced down the hall to the stairs, she received another surprise; Cardin was standing in front of her. He looked confused but also hateful and predatory. ”Hey! What was that about Vampires?” He demanded.

Weiss barely slowed down. She ran up and grabbed him by the shoulders, shocking him, then drove her knee as hard as she could into his crotch. Twice. Cardin screamed and crumpled to the ground.

Weiss barely gave him a thought. She continued, down the stairs where she paused for a single moment. Should she steal the keys to Winter’s car? No. She didn’t know how to drive; besides Weiss knew it could be tracked. By the police if no one else. She opened the door and ran out into the night, and she ran and ran and ran and ran. She didn’t stop until she’d reached the woods.

Weiss rushed into the trees, bruising her bare feet on the rocks and roots for a few minutes, then paused and panted. She shivered. It was late spring, and it was Florida, but the heiress felt cold in her thin, silk nightgown. She examined her cell phone, glad she had remembered to grab it.

_Would she answer?_ she wondered. Then, she took a breath and a leap of faith as she hit the speed dial. The dial tone answered once. Twice. Three times. Four ti—

“*Weiss,*” Ruby asked. *What’s up?*

”Winter knows,” Weiss said.

”What?” Ruby asked.

”Winter walked into my room and saw the bite marks,” Weiss chattered.

”Where are you? Is it safe? What’s wrong with your voice, Weiss?” Ruby asked.

“I’m in the woods,” Weiss replied. “I just panicked and, and I ran.”

She heard a sound like branches snapping and rushing wind. “*Stay where you are, Weiss; we’re coming to get you.*” Another voice sounded. Ruby conveyed the message. “*Uncle Qrow says to stay on the line and keep talking. Say something!*”

”Say what?” Weiss yelled.

”*We’re at the car!*” Ruby cried. Weiss heard the engine start and the then roar as Qrow (she presumed) gunned the motor. “I’m putting you on speaker!” The radio stared blaring country music, which seemed odd given what she knew of the family, but whatever.

Qrow was still on his own cell phone, judging by what he was saying.

”*I don’t care, Tai, just tell them something! . . . And don’t forget to tell Yang and other kids to expect company! Ruby take my phone and open the maps. Weiss, what’s your address? How close are the woods to your house?*”
I live in Terra Sylva,” Weiss replied, referring to the rice neighborhood on the Easternmost edge of town. “The woods are practically behind my house!”

“All right; we can be there in half an hour!” Qrow said. Weiss’ brain instinctively did the math and thought that was at least 10 minutes too fast unless they were speeding.

“Drive safe!” She yelled.

"Vampires!” he shouted back.

“So, Weiss,” Ruby asked. “Seen any good movies lately?”

“No,” Weiss replied. She heard a branch snap. “Are there panthers in this part of Florida.”

“No,” Qrow said. “I think they live farther north?”

“You think?”

“Weiss, we hunt all the time,” Ruby interjected. “If there were any panthers around here, we’d know!”

“What about black bears? Wild hogs? Alligators?”

“Climb a tree if you’re scared!” Qrow yelled.

“I can’t climb I’m in a nightgown!”

This continued on for half an hour; Weiss jumping at every sound, and the Vampires hastening to reassure her.

“OK, we’re hear, Weiss!” Ruby said. The heiress heard the car park. “I’m coming just wait five minutes, all right?”

“Wait! Ruby—” Weiss shouted, but it was too late. The line was dead.

Weiss held herself. How was Ruby planning to find her. Weiss didn’t see any headlights; so they weren’t parked anywhere near by. The heiress shivered again. She debated calling Ruby back, but what if she didn’t answer. What if—

“Weiss!” a voice called.

The heiress jumped. Her breath caught before she could scream.

“Don’t worry, Weiss; it’s me!” Ruby stepped into view. The moonlight illuminated her making Her silver eyes shine and highlighting the blood stains on her clothes, her hands, and around her mouth. For the first time, Weiss saw her as what she was: a predator.

“Ruby!” She screamed, and ran into her beloved’s arms.

Strong arms wrapped around her, holding her tight. Idly, Weiss noted that blood and mud were staining her gown, but she didn’t care. All she cared about was the cool, comforting embrace and the voice in her ear. “I’ve got you, Weiss. I’ve got you.”

"Weiss!” another voice called. Another familiar voice, but not one Weiss wanted to hear.

“Hold on,” Ruby replied, before picking Weiss up in her arms and running.

This must be what riding a dog feels like to a flea, Weiss thought as Ruby tore across the woods like a bat out of . . . Heaven, actually. That seemed more appropriate a descriptor for Ruby. She might be a Vampire, but in her arms, Weiss felt more like she was being carried by an angel.

Within minutes, they were at Qrow’s idling car. Ruby flung open the door and deposited Weiss swiftly, but gently inside. “Her sister’s following her!” the Vampires said, buckling her lover up. “Drive now!”

“Crap!” Qrow growled before slamming down on the accelerator and spinning the car around in a move Weiss was sure she’d never be able to pull off. As they rocketed down the road, he asked. “Weiss, you still got your phone?”

“Yes,” she replied.

“Turn it off. Don’t just lock the screen; turn it all the way off, or they’ll track the signal.”

Weiss did as she was told. “Now what?” she asked.

“Now, you rest. Yang’ll Probably have something hot for you at the house, and Tai’s set up the guest bedroom. Speaking of,” Ruby, get your phone out, and dial the House, will you?” Qrow asked.

“I want to sleep with her,” Ruby said.

The car swerved. “Ruby?” Qrow yelled. Weiss couldn’t blame him; she was shocked at the request, too.

Ruby’s brain caught up with what she said. “Oh! Uh, not like that! I meant beside her! With clothes on! I just don’t think Weiss should be alone tonight.”

Qrow sighed. “Fine, but I’m asking Yang and Blake and Pyrrha to pile into bed with you.”

“You want a Succubus to keep us from . . .”

“Just give me the phone,” Qrow said, exasperation clear in his voice.

“He spoke to Taiyang, but Weiss didn’t pay attention to it. She lay her head against Ruby’s shoulder, the events of the day catching up to her. She drifted off to sleep, despite the blaring music from the still-playing stereo.

What if I was made for you

And you were made for me?

What if this is it?

What if it’s meant to be?

Chapter End Notes

Some of you might find Winter’s treatment of Weiss a little extreme. In Winter’s defense
(even though she is a racist), she’s kind of having a panic attack here. I mean, how would you react if you’d just realized your baby sister had been attacked by a monster in the recent past and you’d missed it?

The song lyrics are from “What If,” by Kane Brown featuring Lauren Alaina. I just read “Cat’s Cradle,” by dhapin, an excellent story which makes heavy use of song lyrics.

Fans of Grimm probably caught a reference to my favorite TV show. I didn’t like the Wesen Council when they were first introduced (I thought they made the Royals and the Verrat seem less powerful if there was another body governing the Wesen world), but I came to understand they weren’t really a governing body; they were the secret police who didn’t make the rules but enforced them with maximum prejudice.
Adjusting

Chapter Notes

Thanks again to RedLikeRuby for the character of Dearg, who is turning out to be even more fun than I initially thought she would. We should be seeing more of her next time.

Also, the hymn that’s quoted in this chapter is “Where Charity and Love Prevail.”

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Once again, Weiss woke up alone in a strange bed in the Rose/Xiao-Long/Branwen household, which was surprising, given she’d gone to bed with four other people. Getting up, she looked down and wondered if she should change into something other than her stained nightgown. Then she remembers she had nothing else to wear and that she was hiding from her sister and that her sister was a genocidal maniac. She sat down again, taking a few deep breaths. For a moment, all she wanted to do was crawl back under the covers and never wake up, but then her stomach growled and she decided that could wait until after breakfast. Actually, a quick look at the clock on the wall told her brunch was more appropriate.

The heiress walked down the stairs and into the kitchen. Once again, she was surprised to see only one person present: Qrow.

“Morning, Princess,” he said taking a sip of his . . . coffee?

”Good morning,” she said. Looking around, she asked, “Where is everyone?”

”Church."

Weiss blinked. “Church?”

“That’s what I said,” Qrow replied. “Yeah, monsters go to Church. Or Synagogue, Mosque, or Temple or whatever. I don’t, but that’s ‘cause I’m agnostic.”

Weiss sat down at the table. “Blake told me that religious objects don’t hurt Vampires . . .”

Meanwhile, in St. Monty’s Church a few miles away

Ruby stood in the pews with her father sister and two friends who were basically family, holding a hymn book and singing along with the rest of the congregation

No race or creed can love exclude

If honored be God’s Name.

Our family embraces all

Whose Father is the same.

Back with Weiss and Qrow.

”Not unless the Vamp has an allergy to the metal or whatever the object is made of,” Qrow replied.
“Or some psychotic hunter heats it up to brand you with it. Don’t be surprised; we’ve lived in human society for centuries—heck, some of us used to be Human. We’re in every part of society: schools, offices, church groups. Actually, the Rev in Tai and the kids’ Church is a Vamp herself, and there’s a Were preacher in town, I think.” He paused and took another sip of coffee. “Weiss, our history is your history, for the most part. Creatures fought in the American Revolution, the Civil War, both World Wars. Some of us in more than one. We care here on the Mayflower, through Ellis Island, or walked across the land bridge from Asia. We suffered in the Depression, fell in love with Lucy and Elvis and the Beetles right along with you. We cheered when Armstrong took that first step on the Moon, and we waited along with the rest of the world to find out who shot JFK.”

Weiss nodded. “When I first saw Ruby and Yang’s room, I never would’ve guessed she wasn’t Human. It was so . . .”

“Geeky?” Qrow offered. “Yeah, it is. And you know Pyrrha is obsessed with romance movies. Jaune and Sun swap comics with Ruby and Yang. And i’ve heard Dearg humming along with show tunes.” He looked her in the eyes. “We’re really not that different from you, Weiss. No matter what talents or diets we have.”

Weiss nodded.

"Winter, calm down."

"Do NOT tell me to calm down!" Winter shouted. She was standing across from Ironwood in his office at the Slayers’ base. Dressed in her combat gear, she twitched like an agitated tiger, ready to pounce at the first chance. “My sister has disappeared! And she’s been attacked by a Vampire and failed to tell me about it!”

"She probably didn’t know how to tell you without sounding insane,” Ironwood pointed out.

"She knows she can talk to me about anything!” Winter screeched.

Ironwood’s next words were spoken quietly. "Perhaps she didn’t want to tell you.”

"What are you saying James? That my sister’s a bloodwhore?” Her sword hand twitched.

". . . No, of course not,” Ironwood replied. A little too slowly. “But i’ve heard assault survivors can be . . . reluctant, ashamed even, to talk about their experiences.

"I’ve be heard the same.” Winter’s voice was tense, almost a growl.

“Regardless, we’ll devote all resources to finding her, of course. There is the chance she’s been abducted by monsters. I suggest you start planning what you’ll say to the police and media; we’ll be using their resources as well as our own.”

Winter nodded. Standard operating procedure for locating a person of interest. “I’ll get on it right away,” she said. Then spun around and stalked out of the room.

Ironwood leaned back and let out a long breath. For a moment there, he’d actually thought she might draw her blade and attack him. Or punch his face.

The man shook his head. He had no younger siblings nor children of his own, so he couldn’t honestly say her understood her feelings, but he could still appreciate how hard this had to be for her.
That said, he also realized how compromised she was on this case. She was unwilling to consider the worst possibilities. Which meant, he’d have to be a touch more “involved” in this hunt. Picking up his phone, he hit a number on his speed dial. “Ciel,” he said. “Come to my office. I have a new assignment for you.” Involved didn’t always mean directly involved. Deception was often the better part of valor.

She The others find out about Weiss’ situation. Dearg is not amused.

Ruby and the others had a couple errands to run on the way back from Church, and Weiss was getting frantic. Why weren’t they back yet? Had something happened? Where was Ruby?

"They’re here," Qrow said, nonchalantly.

Weiss whipped her head up and saw the cars pulling into the driveway.

Weiss froze. Ruby was dressed in a red and white dress that ended just below her knees. A rose decorated the side of her hip. A silver cross hung on a chain around her neck. A big floppy hat and red-tinted sunglasses completed her outfit.


Yang chuckled. “Don’t worry Ruby. You’ve just stunned her. Happened to me once with Blake.”

"Once?" Blake asked.

"Jaune gets that way sometimes, too,” Pyrrha said, sounding embarrassed. “It’s a complement, Ruby. Take it.”

The Vampire blushed, and it somehow made her look even more adorable. “Oh, um. Thanks, Weiss.”

By this point, Weiss’ brain had finished rebooting, and a fierce blush covered her face. “You’re welcome, Ruby,” she said.

"Hahaha! Reminds me of my wedding days!” Tai chortled, brining up the rear. He and Yang were carrying several heavy-looking bags. “We usually go out to brunch after Church, it since you don’t have anything other than that nightgown, we decided to bring it home. Chow time, folks.”

The bags contained take out boxes filled with pancakes, fried chicken, fruit salad, mixed vegetables, and biscuits. The group set up the table with plates, napkins, and silverware, along with milk, orange juice, and fresh coffee. Pyrrha put another, smaller bag on the counter.

“We also ran by the store to pick up some makeup and hair dye for you, Weiss.”

"Makeup? Hair dye?” The gears turned in her mind. “You mean a disguise,” she said.

“Right,” You can probably wear Ruby’s clothes out, but you’ll need clothes and stuff for yourself sooner or later,” Tai said. “So, tomorrow, you’re going shopping.”

"Thank you,” Weiss said. She frowned, thinking. “I believe I have about $50 in my wallet. That should be enough for—“

"Save your money, Weiss,” Yang said. “We’re paying for this.”

"Who’s we, Yang?” Qrow asked.
“I know we aren’t as well off as you’re accustomed to, Weiss,” Tai said. “But we have enough to help you settle in.”

“Start making a list of stuff you want or need,” Blake said. “That’ll keep your spending down.”

“Fair warning, though,” Yang said. “We don’t go to whatever rich people stores you’re used to. So get ready to wear poor people clothes.”

“Yang!” Ruby said. “Stop trying to—”

At that moment, the house phone began ringing. “I’ve got it,” Tai said. He got up and walked over to the headset. “It’s from Dearg’s House,” he announced. “Hello?”

“Whtsgnnnovrhr!” Weiss couldn’t hear the actual words, but the intentions were clear. Someone was unhappy.

“I knew this would happen,” Qrow said, examining his cell phone. Weiss realized it was vibrating. “I made some calls last night. Figured folks should know what’s up.”

“Uncle Qrow!” Ruby cried. “Why would you do that?”

“Because this affects all of us,” Pyrrha said. Turning to the heiress, she said, “I’m sorry Weiss, but your sister’s discovery puts us all in danger.”

Weiss hung her head and tried to turn invisible. But a cool hand reached out and took her own. She looked up and saw Ruby smiling at her. “It’s not your fault, Weiss. We couldn’t keep this a secret forever.”

Weiss smiled back at her younger girlfriend. Yet, as she heard Tai arguing with the Banshee on the phone and Qrow answering his own phone and Blake and Pyrrha pulling out their’s as well, she worried.

Chapter End Notes

Welp. Things are about to get even more complicated for Weiss and company.

I stole some of Qrow’s speech from “Dead Witch Walking,” first book of The Hollows series. I’m not overly fond of the series (I tried it but failed to get into it, especially the bizarre decisions to pair Rachel with Trent after all the crap he pulled in the first book), but I loved Rachel’s description of the Hollows and how very Human Inderlanders are.

I also mostly stole—err, was inspired by the dress Kate Bishop wore in issue 7 of “Hawkeye” (which is excellent, by the way, and I’m mostly a DC boy, so you know I’m impressed) and based Ruby’s off it. Despite all my female relatives and all the years I’ve been going to Church, I still can’t think of anything nice for a teenage girl to wear that isn’t club wear or way too fancy (i.e. not the prom dress).

The phrase “bloodwhore” comes from Yasmine Galenorn’a OTHERWORLD series. A lot of writers have written about Humans who voluntarily feed Vampires, but I thought hers was the most appropriately judgemental.
After brunch, Ruby offered Weiss some of her clothes so the runaway heiress could wear something other than a stained nightgown. Honestly, they probably should have thought about that last night, but with all the stress and drama—not to mention the lack of sleep—no one had thought if that.

While she did that, Tai changed the sheets on the bed she was sleeping on for the time being. Weiss protested; she should have done that, since it was mostly her fault. Tai had just waved it off. “It wasn’t just you, Weiss. Besides, I like to feel like I’m doing something to contribute; I didn’t for too long.”

Weiss hadn’t asked what he meant by that. There was a pained look in his eyes, and she knew better than to ask.

Afterwards, Weiss joined the group in the living room. Qrow sat in a chair drinking something from a flask—the runaway decided not to ask what given that he was a Vampire. Tai sat down on the couch a turned on the news. Ruby, Yang, and Blake sat down in the middle of the floor to play a board game. If it wasn’t for the fact that the dark curtains had been pulled over the windows, blocking out the harsh light of day, it would’ve looked like a typical lazy Sunday afternoon. Weiss stood there for a few moments, staring at the scene and wondering where she fit into it all, before Ruby waved her off and invited her to join the game. Weiss hesitated for a moment, but Yang and Blake encouraged her, so she walked over and joined the trio.

Half an hour later, the runaway heiress was ready to tear the board apart in fury. “How are you winning? I control all of Asia?”

Yang shrugged. “I’m just that good.”

Blake shook her head. “Forget it, Weiss. Yang’s Creature power is mastering every board game ever made.”

Winter’s commercial comes on.

“Breaking news,” the news anchor declared. “Weiss Schnee, daughter of the prominent Schee family has disappeared. The young Beacon local ran away from her home two nights ago . . .”

Weiss stopped listening. There, on the TV, was her face. The word MISSING above the photo.

"Do these people not know how to count?” Yang’s asked. “Weiss ran away last night, not two nights ago!”

“It’s Winter,” Weiss said. “She must have bribed someone or lied or . . .” She buried her head in her hands. This was awful. This was so, so horrible. Not even Ruby’s embrace from behind could make her feel better.

“Winter . . .” Ironwood sighed. “This is not helpful.”

“This is my sister’s well being!” Winter snapped.
“By bringing undue attention to the situation—”

“I’ve made it more likely someone will see her!” Winter snapped.

“Or that she’ll panic and run further away,” Ironwood gently suggested.

“She shouldn’t be running at all!” Winter spat. “What happened to her? Why didn’t she tell me a Vampire had taken a bite out of her?”

“Perhaps it seemed to strange to explain,” Ironwood gently suggested. “And she was concerned you’d think she was insane.”

“Maybe,” Winter allowed. She didn’t sound terribly convinced.

The older man across from her didn’t blame her skepticism. It sounded unlikely to him, too. After all, no matter how strange, the sheer violence of the incident should’ve prompted her to tell her guardian or sought medical attention. Even if it hadn’t, she shouldn’t have fled her sister. Attacking her no less.

No. Weiss knew what she was doing. She had betrayed her race, sided with the monsters. This mess might just cost him his best Slayer.

Said Slayer was currently doing a good impression of a frantic parent. “She should’ve come to me,” Winter said. “She should have.”

“Yes,” Ironwood agreed gently. “She should have.”

Weiss sat idly in the guest bedroom. As much as she enjoyed the company of her new friends, she was still an introvert at heart, and she needed some time to rest to process the convoluted situation she now found herself in. There was a knock at the door. Curious, Weiss got up and answered it, wondering if Ruby wanted to talk. Alas, it was not Ruby, but her grinning sister.


“What?” the runaway heiress yelled.

Yang rolled her eyes. “We need to buy clothes for you, so tell me how big you are.”

Weiss frowned. “I usually wear an adult small. Sometimes a medium.”

Yang nodded. “I guessed that. But they don’t sell bras in small, medium, or large.” She was grinning widely.

“You . . .!” Weiss hissed and slammed the door in the blonde’s face. Yang’s loud laughter on the other side did not help the blush on her face. This stalemate lasted another minute or two before Weiss—still blushing—grumbled out her measurements.

“Thanks, Weiss,” Yang said, and the heiress could just imagine the evil look in her eye. “She’s all your’s, Sis!”

Weiss’ face, somehow became redder as she flung open the door to see Yang skipping down the hall as Ruby—also blushing—stood in front of the door. The two stood there, staring at each other for a moment. Weiss contemplated slamming the door again, but somehow managed to suppress the urge. “. . . Ruby . . . How can I help you?”
“Weiss, um, it’s about your clothes and stuff. Do you have any . . . Requests? I don’t know if we can afford the brands you’re used to—probably not—but are there any colors or styles you’d like?”

Oh, that was . . . comfortable. So much more comfortable. Weiss thought about it. “I like white and blue. Red too, but in small amounts. Yellow and orange look bad on me.”

Ruby’s smile widened, and her own blush decreased. “Are there any designs you like? Do you want jeans or pants or skirts? A nice dress?”

“What would I do with a nice dress?” Weiss asked. “I can’t leave the house for the foreseeable future.”

“Actually, we have a plan for that, Weiss,” Ruby said. Despite her positive news, she sounded uncomfortable. “You might not like it though.”

“How could I not like the chance to continue living some semblance of a life?” Weiss asked.

“That depends on how much you like your hair . . .” Ruby said.

“Ready, Weiss?” Blake asked.

Weiss stayed stock-still. She’d asked Blake to do this because she wasn’t certain Yang wouldn’t purposefully hack her hair to pieces as a joke—probably not, but there was a look in the blonde’s eyes that Weiss didn’t trust. And Ruby . . . Weiss loved the Vampire, but Ruby was still only 16 and often a little too exuberant. Blake was calm, and Weiss was fairly certain the Were wouldn’t mess her hair up too badly.

Then again, she thought, as the first snips of hair began to fall, how much would there left to mess up?

Black continued snipping away. When she was done, the sideways ponytail that had been on Weiss’ head for years was gone. Her hair was in a pixie cut. “How does it look?” Blake asked.

“Good, I guess,” Weiss said. It was so different from what she was used to. So new.

“Good,” Blake said, taking a bottle in her hands. “Now, here’s stage two.”

Weiss sat in silence, watching as Blake worked the dye into her hair, changing her snowy white locks into dull black. New hair style, new hair color, and makeup to hide the scar. That’s what it would take to walk down the street for the time being. Maybe for the rest of her life. Weiss sighed. Life was hard when you learned your older sister was a serial killer.

Chapter End Notes

If anyone thinks a new hairstyle and covering up a scar won’t work, I suggest you look up the story of John Dellinger, wanted by federal agents and the police for murder of an officer (well, technically it was self-defense, but you just shouldn’t shoot a cop). He got plastic surgery that minutely modified his chin and nose, and then proceeded the attend baseball games in public for months before the long arm of the law finally caught up with him.
Other (fictitious) examples: Superman’s Clark Kent disguise is 95% Oscar-level acting, and 5% glasses (go re-watch the scene in Lois’ room from the original movie if you don’t believe me). The original Nick Fury claimed all he had to do to go undercover was dye his hair and remove his eyepatch (Fury was mostly blind in one eye, but the organ was otherwise in-tact).
That night, the assembled group decided to put Weiss’ new look to the test. The runaway heiress also got to try out her new wardrobe. Instead of her usual white ensemble, she was dressed in a light blue t-shirt with the image of a dolphin leaping beside a picture of Florida along with a pair of skinny jeans (Yang’s idea) and white and blues tennis shoes.

They all piled into two cars and drove downtown. Weiss, sitting next to Ruby in the backseat, was torn between watching the world pass by on the road and wanting to keep her head down. Ruby, her father, and Blake spoke about plans for the summer, including what security precautions the needed to take to avoid Specialists. Weiss didn’t contribute much to the conversation, but she payed attention to it; Specialists were as much a threat to her now as they were to her friends.

They pulled into a parking spot in front of a strip of buildings. Tai and Qrow led them out down the street. It was past 8 o’clock on a Sunday night, but there were still plenty of people out and about. As such, Weiss’ head was doing a pretty good imitation of a bobble head, swiveling around and around, checking every face she passed for any signs of recognition.

“Weiss,” Blake said. “Stop looking around.”

Qrow grunted. “Nothing draws attention like someone who can’t keep her head still. People only do that when they’re worried.”

“All you did was change my hair and have me cover my scar,” Weiss snapped. “That won’t fool anyone.”

“Not if you draw attention to yourself,” Qrow countered.

“Without your scar and your hair, you’re just another face in the crowd,” Blake said. “The people who don’t know you won’t look very closely—unless you give them a reason to look.”

“What about her eyes?” Ruby asked. Weiss and Blake turned to her, and the Vampiress blushed. “Weiss has really pretty, really expressive eyes. Wouldn’t they give her away?”

Yang snorted. “Most people aren’t in love with her.”

“Sh-shut up!” her little sister replied, ducking her head.

It was so adorable, Weiss couldn’t help but smile like an idiot. A breeze blew through her new hairdo, and the smile fell. The heiress tugged on one of her shortened locks. “Is . . . Am I just not memberable on my own?”

“Of course you are, Weiss!” Ruby said, taking her hand.
“You’ve made an impression on us,” Blake said.

"Who are you again?” Yang asked, grinning widely. Weiss elbowed the blonde, which set her off on a laughing jag.

The group reached their dinner destination. It was a little out of the way place; a green-painted metal door in an ancient brick building. Actually, it was a row of buildings, like an old-fashioned strip mall. Above the door, a battered sign that looked a hundred years old identified the location as Lucky Thirteen. It had an old-world feel to it. Lots of wood: floors, walls, and tables. Thirteen circular tables of various sizes stood spread out among the thirteen collums which held the cieling up. From that ceiling hung thirteen spinning fans.

Thirteen stools at the bar provided more places. Thirteen high windows would’ve let in more light during day, probably bouncing off the thirteen mirrors on the walls. The wall spaces that weren’t covered with mirrors were covered with photographs of people, and streets and paintings that depicted scenes from mythology and fairytales. The columns were carved with vines and flowers and woodland creatures. A pair of pool tables stood on opposite sides of the room, and a few couches and big chairs stood across the wall from the bar. In the corners, TVs showed the news and a baseball game. The far wall had a jukebox. It wasn’t crowded, but there was a respectable collection of people.

"This place really likes the number thirteen,” Weiss noted.

“You take every little bit of extra protection you can,” Qrow groused before walking off to the bar with Yang, leaving Tai to find her, Ruby, and Blake a free table. “I pay enough for booze; I can’t afford to replace the tables.”

Weiss did her best to parse his words. "Your Uncle . . . This is his bar?” she asked.

"Pretty cool, huh?" Ruby asked.

“What’s with the tables and collums?” Weiss asked.

"Feng Shui,” Tai said.

"Magic,” Ruby whispered, grinning.

"Seriously, Ruby," Weiss said.

"I am serious, Weiss,” the Vampiress said. "It's magic!"

Blake explained further. “The tables and columns are set up in such a way to dispel psionic and spiritual energies and promote positive feelings. Check the walls, too. There are hex signs and sigils to bring good luck, prosperity, and protection.”

“That actually works?” Weiss asked. One would think she’d stop being surprised at anything after learning half her social circle was a creature of myth and legend, but magic was . . . magic.

”To a point,” Blake said. The four sat down at one of the larger tables. “This place is more like a beach umbrella than a mystical bomb shelter; it won’t stop any real trouble, and the staff has to work hard to keep up their success. The magic just keeps drunks from getting angry enough to get violent, especially the Creature ones, and psychics, if they’re here, can’t make trouble, and they help make sure they get 100% returns on all that work.”

Weiss frowned. "All right, but how does that work with . . . ?" she gestured to the people around
"They're Creatures, too," Ruby explained. "Mostly."

"All of them?" Weiss asked.

"Most of them," Tai explained. "This place doesn’t advertise, not really. Qrow spread the word amongst our community when he first opened up shop, and now most everyone in the know knows about it. There are other Humans in here, but it's usually folks like you, me, and Yang who have some kind of relationship to Creatures. Some are Psychics or Witches or stuff. Unenlightened Humans don’t often walk in.”

"But they do occasionally, so watch what you say,” Blake interjected, before Weiss could ask about Psychics and Witches.

Qrow and Yang came back with glasses of ice water and drinks for everyone. Tai got a beer, and the others were given glasses of iced tea. “Uncle Qrow makes it himself,” Ruby explained, taking a hearty swig.

“Really?” Weiss asked before taking a sip of her own. To her delight, the she found the drink the perfect blend of tang and sweetness.

“Really,” said Tai, putting his own glass down. “Qrow brews the tea, the ale, even the coffee and lemonade himself. Water’s about the only beverage someone else makes,” he said with a chuckle.

Blake chimed in. “They also bake the bread and make the deserts here too. The price is a little higher, but the food is worth it.”

"And it’s a place where Creatures can go to get . . . food for ourselves,” Ruby admitted. In addition to her tea and water, she had a third, dark-amber-colored glass. Weiss was getting to the point where she could recognize the dark, thick liquid inside as blood on sight.

"Just as long they make sure no one hears the orders who shouldn’t,” Yang said, setting down a couple of trays on the table. They contained an assortment of snacks: cheese cubes, nuts, fruit slices, and chucks of chocolate. “Eat up, Princess; the rest will take awhile.”

"But we didn’t order,” the heiress protested.

“It’s your first time here,” the blonde replied. “That means you get the special treatment. Don’t worry; anything you don’t eat, we’ll take home and eat tomorrow.”

"Assuming we don’t eat it ourselves,” Blake snarked. Indeed, Ruby was already digging into the assorted snacks. While Yang was talking to Weiss, Qrow had brought over some baskets of pretzels, from which Yang snatched one of the salted breadsticks before sauntering off after him, and Weiss decided it was probably a good idea to take the blonde’s advice.

Still, as she saw the amount of food spread out before her, Weiss couldn’t help but sink down in her seat. “What’s wrong?” Ruby asked.

“You’re all spending so much money on me,” Weiss whispered.

"If you want a job, I’ll help you look for one,” Tai said.

“A job,” Weiss sighed. “I was planning to take a gap year before college and work with Winter in the family business. But that’s impossible now.”
“I’ll bet Uncle Qrow would be willing to give you a job,” Ruby offered.

"He’s always whining about the bills,” Tai said. “Are you any good at math?”

"I am quite competent,” Weiss said.

"I should hope so,” Blake replied. “Miss Harvard.”

Weiss huffed at them. Unfortunately, everyone else just laughed at her indignation. Even her girlfriend. The traitor. After a moment, she couldn’t stay mad at them; the atmosphere was just too pleasant.

Another question occurred to her. “Why is Yang helping Qrow with the food and such? For that matter, why is he serving us? I thought we were all eating together.”

"We are,” Tai explained. “Don’t let my brother-in-law’s sourness fool you; this is his idea of treating us, feeding us for free.”

"Yang’s helping because she wants to own her own barbecue restaurant someday, or at least be a professional chef in one. So for now she’s working for Qrow to get experience.”

Weiss nodded. It wasn’t so different from what she had been planning to do with Winter and the family business. Before . . . She shook her head. Now was not the time to think about that.

They continued talking about safe, normal subjects until Yang and Qrow brought out the food: plates of fish and chips with mushy peas, steak sandwiches with curly fries, and flatbread pizza. Weiss was surprised by the amount of food.

“Just try some, Weiss!” Ruby encouraged her, slicing a sandwich in half and depositing it on Weiss’ plate. The heiress-on-The-run shrugged, picked it up, and took a bite.

Manna from Heaven. Ambrosia of Olympus. Where had this been all her life? Everything from the seasoning of the meat, the onions and peppers, the cheese, the bread. It all mixed together to create something truly wonderful. She wondered if Qrow used more of his magic to make the food taste this good.

Ruby smiled widely at her reaction. Taking a bite of her own half of the sandwich. Yang and Qrow brought more food and joined them; together the group dig into the food. Tai shared some of his fish with her (Blake, she noticed, had a basket all to herself that she wasn’t offering to share), and she took some bites of the pizza.

All the food was excellent, and Weiss began to ease up. After they were done eating, the group gravitated over to one of the pool tables, and they spent another hour or two playing each other. None of the other patrons expressed any real interest in Weiss, a couple coming by to say hello to the adults and their charges. They looked right at Weiss and saw nothing!

She wanted to giggle. They saw nothing! She was invisible!

She was invisible . . . That thought drained some of the emotion from Weiss’ mind. Eventually, the group decided it was time to head home. They walked out of the pub and down the street. It was less crowded now, but there were still a few smokers outside other restaurants as well as cars that passed them on the streets.

As they walked, Weiss’ insides felt colder and colder. It was Blake who noticed her issues first. 
“What’s bothering you now, Princess?” She asked.

“It’s nothing,” she said.

“Weeeeiiissssss . . .” Ruby said, drawing her name out. “Tell us what’s wrong.”

“It’s dumb,” the heiress said.

“No, it’s not,” Ruby insisted.

“It probably is,” Yang said. “But we’ll listen anyway.”

“No one notices me,” Weiss whispered.

“Do you want the police to appear on the front porch tomorrow morning?” Blake asked.

“No, but . . .” Weiss considered how to put it into words. “All I had to hide was my scar and my hair . . .”

“Why?” Ruby asked.


“They don’t know what they’re missing,” Ruby said, reaching out, she wrapped Weiss in a hug. Weiss jumped a little, before settling into Ruby’s arms.

Ironwood gives Ciel a dossier on Weiss. Tells her to investigate and keep it a secret from Winter.

“This is all the data we have on the subject,” Ironwood said, handing his rising star a folder. “It’s limited; you’ll have to do a lot of your own research on her friends and acquaintances yourself.

“Yes, sir,” Ciel said. Taking the dossier in hand, she opened it and began scanning the information. Medical history. Education history. Records of extra-curricular achievements including fencing, piano lessons, dance classes, and singing lessons. Lists of acquaintances and relatives. One of which daughter her eye. She knew about the relationship, of course, but it was still jarring.

“What about Slayer Schnee?” The young woman asked. “Is she a suspect?”

“Not now,” Ironwood replied. “I believe she is simply naive about her sister’s . . . Relationships. As such, your highest priority is to keep your Investigations covert. At least for now.

“Understood, sir,” Ciel said. For now . . .

Chapter End Notes

Am I the only person who thinks the state of Florida looks like a dolphin? Yay! More character stuff. We’ll get back to action and stuff later, but for now Weiss is exploring her new world, and we’re going along for the ride.

The Lucky Thirteen Bar and Grill (Trademark) is based off the Dhal Riata from LOST
GIRL and MacAnally’s from THE DRESDEN FILES. Dresden isn’t my favorite series (I like monsters better than wizards, and most of Dresden’s monsters are inherently evil, so it’s hard to get into any of them) but it’s really well-written, so I’ve read a bunch of the books, and MacAnally’s is my favorite part; I just loved the idea of a bar where the supernatural folks could hang out (this was before I saw LOST GIRL). Shame I can’t use Mac himself, but now I’ve got a nod for Qrow.

This is our first glimps of Magic in this series; I don’t expect we’ll get Wizards hurling fireballs and lightning bolts any time soon, if ever. Magic is more subtle here and more spiritual. We may eventually get to GAME OF THRONES level magic, but I don’t think we’ll ever be at HARRY POTTER or KANE CHRONICLES level.
First Date

Chapter Notes

Yeah! First update of 2019! Sorry it's taken so long, everyone. Between the holidays and getting back to words afterwards, I haven't been best about writing. Hope this makes up for the wait.

Some people have asked if there are any evil Creatures or if it was all just Specialist Propaganda. Allow me to answer that question here. Also, enjoy the White Rose Fluffiness.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Weiss went over her meager wardrobe once again. She had about a dozen different t-shirts, three blouses, four pairs of jeans, four pairs of shorts, three skirts, and another four semi-formal dresses. It was actually quite generous given how she'd had nothing but the nightgown on her back when she'd arrived. With a little effort, she could mix and match them to make even more outfits. While they weren't as expensive as what she was used to, they were comfortable and nice; some were even cute.

So, why couldn’t she find something to wear?

Weiss glared at the clothes. She was no blushing teen about to go on a first date. She’d dated before, dated popular and handsome boys. So, why was this so hard?

Because, she’d never dated a girl before. Because she’d never spent a couple weeks interacting with any of her previous dates alongside their friends and family before going on the first official date before. Because she’d never felt . . . Felt the same way about any of them as she did about Ruby. Whatever that was.

Weiss ran her hands through her newly shortened hair. It was still disconcerting to feel it or see herself in the mirror. She wondered how long until she got used to it. Which led to the question of how long would she have to keep hiding from her own family, and her family’s Creature-hating band of paramilitary witch hunters.

Weiss sighed and shook her head. Nothing good would come from worrying about it. Instead, she should just enjoy today. Which meant figuring out what to wear.

Finally conceding defeat, Weiss picked up the disposable cell phone Taiyang had provided her with and sent a text to Blake (she didn’t trust Yang to keep it to herself).

*What should I wear?*

Blake didn’t answer immediately. Weiss tapped her foot, waiting. She was about to start cursing at the phone when it finally supplied an answer.

*Clothes.*

Weiss rolled her eyes and typed a response.
Obviously. I meant what clothes?

Ruby helped us pick that stuff out. She’ll like whatever you wear.

Weiss sighed, thought a moment. Then typed her response, blessing the predictive text function and cursing the lack of a real keyboard. I’ve never been to Beach Street. What should I wear?

Clothes.

It was all the formerly-white-haired girl could do not to scream in frustration. Thankfully, Blake sent a response before she could lose it.

It’s warm. Wear shorts or a skirt. Beach Street isn’t fancy.

Not fancy, Weiss thought. She wasn’t sure they had the same standards for “fancy.” Still, if it was supposed to be casual . . . Weiss picked out a light blue skirt and a white t-shirt with a picture of a brightly-colored vase and equally colorful flowers on it. She then put on a small amount of makeup—some of which was ironically borrowed from Riby (whose complexion was most like hers). A little foundation, some pink lipgloss, and she was done.

She walked out of the room and into the kitchen. “OK, I’m ready!”

“Awesome!” Ruby cried. The Vampire hopped up from her chair and turned to face her . . . And both women froze.

Ruby stood stock still, dressed in a black and red striped shirt and a black skirt with red trim along with black sandals. She had no makeup, but had styled her hair—or let someone else do it for her—and she wore a single piece of jewelry: a red rose blossom on a silver chain around her neck. A pair of black sandals completed the outfit.

For some reason, Ruby was just as paralyzed as she was. At least until Yang elbowed her. “Well, I guess it’s safe to say we know how to shop for runaway rich girls.”

Blake smirked. “And I know how to dress Teenage Vampires.”

The newer couple blushed deeply. “Come on, Weiss,” Ruby said, grabbing a big, floppy hat and a pair of pink sunglasses off the table. “Let’s go.”

Qrow drove them to the waterside. The “beach” the street was named for was a thin strip of sand along the water that ended at the pier. Behind it, was a large park, and behind that a thin road and then a line of shops and restaurants. “Where should we go first?” Weiss asked.

Her date (now wearing the hat and sunglasses) took her hand. “I though we cold have lunch first. There’s a cafe Yang took Blake to on their first date.”

Weiss smiled. “That sounds nice.”

It turned out it was not nice. The pair couldn’t find a thing on the menu (mostly dominated by sushi) they wanted, so they decided to leave some money for their drinks and slipped out before the waiter could come back. The two headed off down the street in search of better prospects. As they walked, Ruby’s necklace caught Weiss’ eye, and the heiress asked about it.

“My mother gave me it,” Ruby explained, reaching up to touch it. “It’s my rune.”

"Your what?”
"A lot of us use runes or sigils to identify ourselves," Ruby explained. "Some of them run in families, but some are used by individuals."

"What does it mean?" Weiss asked.

Ruby blushed before answering. "Beauty, health . . . passion, and love. They're all things Mom wished for me to have when I grew up."

"Well, being a Vampire, I guess health is a given," Weiss remarked. They both tried to ignore the fact that passion might very well be a given as well.

The pair stopped in front of another restaurant, this one designed to look like a cabana or bungalow. In addition to the ten or twelve umbrella-bearing tables out front, a few steps led up to a covered porch with more tables. A pair of glass doors led (presumably) into the rest of the restaurant, but there was a woman standing behind a podium eager to help them. "Would you like to sit inside or outside?"

Ruby turned to Weiss, "Want to eat out here? The view’s nice."

"All right," she said. The woman led the two to a small table in the corner of the porch. Ruby sat in the shadow of the support beams; only her place settings were in the sunlight. Sweet tea for the Vampire, lemonade for the heiress. Well, probably ex-heiress now. Weiss ordered a Chicken and caprese sandwich with a side of fruit salad. Ruby got a wrap with fried chicken, lettuce, jalapeños, and honey mustard paired with potato chips.

"I’d have thought you would have preferred to sit inside," Weiss said. She gestured to the shadows Ruby sat in.

Ruby looked around before she answered. "Sunlight’s a problem," she admitted. "It hurts a little, and it’s really bright, but it won’t kill me—not immediately, anyway."

Weiss swallowed. "What do you mean ‘not immediately’?"

Ruby took a long drink from her tea. Looking out onto the street she answered in a quiet, flat voice: "I think prolonged exposure will kill us, same as you. I’ve heard that was a way Vampire Hunters used to use to kill us, chaining us out in the open."

"Oh," Weiss answered.

Their food arrived. "I’m sooooo glad I can eat stuff other than blood," Ruby said, taking a bite of her wrap. "That would be so boring!"

Weiss shook her head as she took a bite of her own sandwich. "Where did those bizarre legends come from?"

Ruby shrugged. "Most of it . . . it was just all they saw. Like the only drinking blood thing. Since the only times Vampires in the old days—before we went into hiding—interacted with humans was to feed off them or recruit them, I guess it made sense that we couldn’t eat normal food."
"Are you all right, Ruby?" Weiss asked. Her girlfriend was staring intently out to the water. It was like Winter sometimes got when she was remembering their mother, the way she'd used to be.

"... My ancestors," Ruby said slowly. "... A lot of them... earned their reputations as monsters, Weiss. They did a lot of bad stuff."

Weiss thought about that, thought about how Ruby had looked when she'd come to Weiss the other night. Eyes shining, blood around her mouth, if it had been anyone other than Ruby, or if it had been Ruby before Weiss had learned what she was like, the redhead would've looked terrifying. Eventually, she replied, "I guess we both have skeletons in our family closets."

"Yeah," Ruby sighed. "We do." They sat in silence for a moment, before Ruby brightened again. "So, I guess we just have to try as hard as we can to make up for them."

A chuckle escaped Weiss' mouth. "Do you really think we can do that?"

"Well, Vampires are immortal, so we'll have all the time we need," Ruby answered, before blushing and dropping her gaze back to her plate. Weiss almost asked why, before it occurred to her. Ruby had just implied that she expected Weiss to become a Vampire to stay with her. In effect, the younger woman expected them to be together forever.

Weiss blushed herself. "It's a little early to be making wedding plans, Ruby," she muttered. Both women's faces blazed even more.

When they were done with their lunch the pair continued down Beach Street. There were plenty of shops and things to visit, including a bookstore, clothing outlets, a small antiques shop, an ice cream shop they resolved to visit on the way back, plus a small gallery that showed paintings, photographs, and glass and marble statues. The couple decided to duck inside to window shop.

"Wow," Ruby said. "I'm not an expert on art or anything, but this one's kind of... weird."

Weiss was inclined to agree. The sculpture was of average quality, and depicted a young man who with average looks and an arrogant sneer on his face.

"Do you like that one?" The attendant came up behind them. "It has an interesting story to it."

"Interesting?" Weiss asked. "How?"

"It's supposed to be cursed. All six of the previous owners ended up in the hospital. The first couple to buy claimed it came to life and attacked them."

"Hospitalized. Did any of them die?"

"No, but they were seriously injured."

"That's so strange," Weiss mused. "Ruby, what do you—Ruby!"

As she'd been speaking to the attendant, Ruby had leaned over to the statue and started sniffing it. Weiss frowned, her eyes darting to the saleswoman and back to Ruby. Not only was this embarrassing, it was a risk of exposure. "What are you doing?" the runaway heiress asked/yelled. She would have gone further, but then Ruby straitened up. The normally exuberant young woman was frowning and staring intently at the statue.

That night, the statue was sitting in the home of a new couple. They'd walked into the shop near
closing time and picked it up, brought it into their home, and installed it in the corner of their living room. They lived in a quiet, residential neighborhood. By midnight, everyone was either asleep or close to it. No one watched the streets, looking for trouble.

Under the light of the moon, a figure dressed in all white picked the lock and slipped in through the back door. First into the kitchen, next he made his way into the living room. Then, the lights flipped on.

"What?" The man looked around. He was chalky white with pure white hair. Dressed in his pure white ensemble, he looked exactly like the statue. Standing in front of him were nine teenagers, most of them armed with baseball bats or hockey sticks, all wearing protective sports gear. It looked like he was being menaced by a squad of umpires.

"What is this?" the man asked.

"It looks like a Zombie about to get his Undead butt kicked," Sun announced.

The man recoiled in shock. "You know what I am?" he asked.

"We do," Pyrrha said, frowning. "A psychopath who’s been following his own statue around for months and attacking anyone who buys it."

"And we’re taking you down!" Jaune cried, holding his bat out like a sword.

"Didn’t I already say that?" Sun asked.

"He did," Nora chirped happily, swinging her bat from side to side in anticipation. She was sporting a grin that would have looked more appropriate on the ostensible serial killer.

"All right," the man. "You know I'm a Zombie, but do you know who I am?"

"Oh, great," Yang muttered. "He's going to start monologuing."

"Your name is Varian Scapegrace," Pyrrha announced, trying to cut it off. "We know you commissioned that statue and you've been working with the saleswoman at the gallery; she's being apprehended as we speak. Surrender now, and you won't get hurt."

At her words, Scapegrace adopted a put-upon expression. "This is insulting," he said. "Don’t they know how dangerous I am? I am very, very dangerous. I’m a killer. I’m a trained killing machine. And still, they send you. A pack of children."

"What age are you?" he continued. "Thirteen? What kind of responsible adult sends a bunch of thirteen-year-old kids to stop me? What kind of thinking is that?"

"We're 18, you idiot!" Sun cried.

Blake nodded. "What kind of thinking do you do?"

"My name is Varian Scapegrace," the Zombie continued, as if no one had spoken in the last five minutes but himself, "and I am the man who is turning murder into an art form. When I—when I kill, I’m actually painting a big, big picture, using blood and, and . . . messiness. You know?" None of the padded and armed teens responded, so he continued. "I’m an artist. Some people don’t appreciate that. Some people don’t recognize true talent when they see it. And that’s fine. I’m not bitter. My time will come."
"What do you want?" Ruby asked. She was standing back with Weiss, standing protectively in front of her girlfriend with a hockey stick held in front of her like a scythe. "Why are you doing this?"

He shook his head. "You wouldn’t understand. It's grown-up stuff. I just want a little appreciation for who I am, that’s all. That’s not much to ask, is it? But of course, you wouldn’t know. You’re just a kid.” He shrugged. “Oh well. Time to die.”

"Have you killed anyone?" she asked quickly.

"What? Did you miss what I said, about turning murder into an art form?"

"But you haven’t actually killed anyone yet, have you?" Weiss asked, I double-checked the story the saleswoman told us. You just put them in the hospital.”

He glowered. “Technically, yeah, all right, maybe I haven’t, but tonight’s the night. You’re going to be my first.”

"Dude," Sun asked. “You’re a Zombie; how are you so bad at killing people and eating their brains?"

"I wasn’t trying to eat their brains!" Scapegrace. “I mean . . . Raw brains! Just splattered on the floor! Besides, that would be like signing my kills with 'I'm a Zombie.' I don't want to make it that easy. Besides, I told you; I’m an artist, not a butcher!"

"You want to kill people!" Ruby cried.

"Key word, ‘want,” Yang added.

The Zombie frowned and withdrew a straight-razor from his coat. "OK, enough chit-chat. It's time I proved just how dangerous and deadly I really am." Then, he charged the group. They all scattered to avoid his bull-rush. Scapegrace's razor might have been sharp, but his reflexes weren't, and so he ended up plowing into the wall head-first. “Ouch!” He yelled. Pausing, he rubbed his forehead. While he was thus preoccupied, Nora ran in and swung her baseball bat at his shoulder. It came down hard, drawing another cry from the Zombie. “You little bitch!” He yelled.

His eyes turned red and he charged again, quicker this time.

"Watch out!” Yang yelled. “He’s in full-on-Zombie-mode!”

"Remember not to let him bite or scratch you!” Pyrrha called. “If you’re not a Creature, you’ll become infected with the Zombie virus and become like him!”

Varian Scapegrace charged again. This time, he ran face-first into Yang’s swinging bat. The wood splintered as he continued . . .

Into another wall.

"Mom and Dad won’t like that,” Ren muttered. It had taken a lot of convincing just to get them to volunteer the use of the house for this little “adventure.” Wrecking the walls would probably make them regret that decision.

This time, the plaster had cracked and the group heard the distinct sound of smote wood damaged. It was disturbing, but that didn’t stop Blake from jumping on his back with a snarl and slashing with her claws. The Zombie shook her off, but she flipped in the air and landed on her feet. While
Scapegrace was looking around, Jaune came up and slammed his bat into the side of his head.

He wasn't as strong as Yang, though, and the bat didn't break; also, Scapegrace didn't go down. "Ouch," the Zombie grunted. It sounded more annoyed than pained. He wiped his sleeve across his bleeding lip, ignoring the damage it did to his white clothes. "You little brat," he snarled. His hand snaked out and grabbed the bat, ripping it from her hand. Pyrrha charged in with her hockey stick, but Scapegrace lashed out with the bat and deflected the blow. Then, he kicked her between the legs; it didn't hurt as bad as if she'd been a man, but it still hurt. It still distracted the redhead for a moment. It distracted her long enough for Scapegrace to drop the bat and grab her by the collar and toss her into the charging Sun. Succubus and Human crashed into each other and fell to the floor dazed.

That dealt with, the Zombie returned his attention to the blonde in his other hand. He grabbed Jaune's mask with the intent to tear it away too, but he'd forgotten about Ruby. With a snarl, the Vampire leapt upon his back, locking her legs around his torso and scraping her fingers across his chest. Ruby kept her nails cut close to the finger, so she didn't shred his clothes and chest the way Blake might have, but Vampire nails are much more dangerous than the Human variety, and they were able fray his shirt some. A little while longer and she might actually reach skin.

Scapegrace didn't give her the chance. Abandoning Jaune, he twisted and turned trying to reach around his back and grab her. He shouldn't have ignored the others, though, because Weiss ran up behind him and kicked him in the bend of his knee. Scapegrace faltered, and that gave Yang the opportunity to run up and sucker-punch him in the face. Then the recovered Pyrrha came up and did likewise. The Succubus had fed recently, so her blow hurt even more than the athletic Human's. Weiss ran up and hugged Ruby from behind, pulling her off the teetering Zombie.

Then, Blake and Ren kept in, claws out and fangs bared, ready to do some real damage to the undead killer. The Zombie surged to his feet and swung his hands around like a child playing "Tornado" and knocked them back.

“You uppity, sneaky little brats. You don’t know who you’re messing with, do you?” He wasn’t panting—he probably didn’t need to breathe—but he had the look of a hungry lion preparing to pounce. He wasn't red-eyed anymore, and was bleeding from a variety of cuts, on his arms, although the blood seemed to flow sluggishly. “I am going to be the greatest killer the world has ever known. When I’m finished with you all, I’m going to deliver your mutilated, bloody corpses to your masters, as a warning. They sent you up against me, alone. Next time they’re going to have to send a battalion.”

Yang, Sun, and Nora all burst out laughing. Most of the others smiled. Even Weiss and Ruby were snickering behind him.

Scapegrace’s anger flared. “What the heck is so funny?” he yelled.

“First of all,” Yang said, her confidence growing, “there are no masters. We don’t have masters. Second, they don’t need a battalion to take you down. And third—and this really is the most important point—whoever said we came alone?”

“Huh?” Scapegrace asked. That was when a dark shape darted out and plowed into him. The Zombie and the shadow rolled around on the floor, and when they came up again, Scapegrace found his arm locked behind his back and a curved blade pressed against his throat.

"Hi," a man with breath that smelled like a distillery said. "Name's Qrow."

Cue flashback
"I smelled Zombie," Ruby explained. "It was all over the statue."

"Zombies . . . Eat brains, don’t they?" Weiss asked, looking queasy. She had come to accept that her girlfriend drank blood and that some of their friends ate organs—but brains . . .

"But this guy hasn’t been eating brains, has he?" Yang said.

"There wouldn’t be survivors if he was," Blake pointed out. "The thing is, Zombiism is the most communicable of all conditions—it’s easier to catch than Lycanthropy and much easier to catch than Vampirism or Ghoulish-ness. Just a scratch or a drop of blood would be enough. So, why haven’t any of his victim’s turned."

"So, maybe Ruby just smelled one of the people who worked there," Tai said.

"I didn’t smell Zombies anywhere else but on the statue," Ruby said. "I smelled a bunch of scents in the store, but the statue was the only thing that smelled like a Zombie."

"Not a lot of Zombies in Florida," Qrow said from his place at the table, nursing his drink. "Back in the 60’s, a bunch of them moved to the Pacific Northwest, where they thought it’d be easier to hide out."

"That still doesn’t explain why none of his victims have died or un-died!" Yang said.

"Un-died?" Weiss asked.

"Well, what would you call it?" Yang asked.

"He would have to be very careful," Qrow said, "but it isn’t impossible. The newspapers say the victims were cut up rather than bitten or scratched. If he kept his nails trimmed psychoticly short and avoided biting anyone . . ."

"All right," Tai said. "So, what are we gonna do about it?"

"We aren’t doing anything," Qrow remarked. Pointing to the assembled teens, he explained, "they are."

"What?" Weiss asked.

"I think I know who this guy is," Qrow said. "Grapevine stuff. Anyway, he’s no big deal—can’t even kill or turn six Unenlightened Humans—you lot prepare a little, and he won’t be a problem."

"All right!" Yang said, banging her fists together. Beside her, Ruby imitated her, while Blake just grew a predatory smile.

"Qrow, are you sure?" Tai asked. Weiss was inclined to agree with him. The others seemed to think this was the ideal form of enterainment, but they were talking about fighting a (literal) killer Zombie.

"They gotta do it sometime," Qrow said. "At least this way, their first opponent won’t be anything too dangerous. Besides," he said, smirking, "it’s not like I won’t be there watching the whole thing . . . ."

Exit Flashback

"What’s going to happen to him?" Weiss asked, sliding down to sit against the wall. She would have collapsed, if Ruby hadn’t appeared at her side and helped ease her down.
"Are you all right?" Ruby asked, checking her over.

"I'm fine, I just—I never expected to be . . ." The runaway heiress looked down and realized she was still white-knuckle gripping her bat.

"I'm sorry you had to do that, Weiss," Ruby said.

The older girl gave a sad smile. "I didn't do much. Everyone else fought him. I barely did anything."

"That's not true, Weiss," Jaune said coming up with Pyrrha beside him. "You were there when Ruby needed you. That's something."

"He's right," Pyrrha said. "Don't be hard on yourself for because you aren't the type of person to jump into a battle. That isn't always the best choice."

"You think so?" Weiss asked.

"You caught Ruby when she fell," Yang said. She was busy rolling her shoulders and shaking her hair out from the mask and helmet. "Believe me, when you're dating a Creature, that's a big deal." Beside her, Blake nodded.

"Yep!" Ruby announced, taking Weiss' hand in hers.

Weiss smiled at the praise—and blushed at Ruby's hand around hers.

Unfortunately for her, her girlfriend's older sister noticed and began grinning widely. "So, Weiss-y," Yang started, "how's that for a first date? A romantic lunch and walk, followed up by a night fighting an idiot Zombie."

Blake snorted, "Because fighting a wannabe serial killer is SO romantic."

"Eh, turns me on," Yang replied, grinning at the Were.

"I'm sorry, Weiss," Ruby said. "I wanted us to have a good time together, not get in a fight with a bad guy."

"It's all right, Ruby. I had a good time with you, and I suppose the fight wasn't terribly unpleasant." She glanced back at the whining Scapegrace. "Even though he is an idiot."

Qrow drove out to the interstate. It was the off season. Right now, almost no one was out on the roads at this time. He took a turn off into a beach near the forest. Parking his car out of sight of the roads, he killed the lights.

He walked out of the car. There was, he knew, a row boat hidden in the mangroves. He knew because he'd been told of it by a friend he trusted with his life. Qrow dragged it out, wrestling with the branches. It took longer than it should have, given his strength, but he didn't want to damage the trees. Even more, he didn't want to hurry, didn't want to get to doing what needed doing.

Eventually, he got the boat and the oars out. Qrow looked out into the dark waters; only the lights of the coastal buildings and moon and the stars gave light to that black water, but to a Vampire, it was bright as morning. There was no one on the water. He was alone and unwitnessed, save for the silent, impassive lights.

The Vampire sighed, then set his face and strode to the car. This part, he wanted—needed—to get
over with as soon as possible. He popped the trunk of his car, revealing the bound and gagged Varian Scalegrace. Formerly gagged, actually, since the Zombie had apparently chewed through the gag.

“My head hurts,” he whined.

Qrow ignored the man and dragged him out and onto his knees. Scapegrace struggled “Let me go!”

”Shut up.” Qrow said.

Scapegrace clammed up. Looking around, he finally took notice of where he was. “Where are we?” He asked.

”Doesn’t matter,” Qrow replied. “Just shut up and start praying to whatever it is you believe in. Whatever’s on the other side, you’re about to meet ‘em.”

The pale man’s face went long. “Wha-what do you mean?”

The Vampire sighed. “I mean I’m going to kill you. I . . . don’t really want to,” the Vampire said. “I’ve got so much blood on my hands already.”

”So why are killing me?” Scapegrace yelled. “We’re both Creatures! I’m not doing anything you don’t!”

“It’s not all from being a Vampire,” Qrow said. “I made a lot mistakes in my life, killed a lot of people. Some of them deserved it; some didn’t. I’ll never know how many either way. Heck, I’m not sure you deserve it, really; you didn't actually kill anyone, after all.” The Vampire shook his head. “If I could, I’d never kill anyone ever again.”

“Then why are killing me?” Scapegrace shrieked.

”Because I don’t have a choice,” Qrow answered. “Because I can’t the risk you coming back for revenge against my nieces if I let you go. Even if you don’t; you’ll probably just go somewhere else and keep on killing people. Trying to, anyway.” The hard-drinking Vampire heaved another, bigger sigh. “That's not something I want on my conscience. And, more importantly, if you do that, you’ll only draw attention to us. Either the Scavs or the Specialists or the freaking Council.” Qrow shook his head. “And then we’ll all suffer.”

”No!” Scapegrace cried, attempting to stand up, but only falling over. Shuffling on the ground, he tried to escape. Qrow reached down and pulled him up. “But I’m supposed to be the Killer Supreme! The Killer Supreme! There would've been theories, copycats, TERRIBLE FILMS!”

Scapegrace screamed and writhed and cried, struggling to free himself. He made threats and promised retribution. He twisted his neck and snapped his teeth at the Vampire’s hands.

Qrow’s hand scythe flashed in the moonlight, and Scapegrace’s head fell to the sand.

Qrow loaded the remains into the boat and rowed out. His strong arms carried him out into the deep water, far from the shoreline. He pushed the body out of the boat. He didn’t need to weigh it down; Zombies didn’t float. The body sank beneath the dark water, and the head followed after it.

Qrow watched them sink, then kept staring for a minute or two afterwards. Then he towed back to the beach. He pulled the rowboat o to the sand, then maneuvered it back into its hiding place in the trees. Then he walked back to the car and fished his cell phone out of the glove box.
He sent a single text to his friends, Done. Before driving home, though, he dialed another number. It rang twice before answering.

"Hello old friend," the kind, cultured voice answered.

"Hey, Oz," Qrow said. “I’ve . . . It’s done. He’s at the bottom now . . . In pieces. I need a drink.”

"Thank you for telling me, Qrow," Oz said softly.

"Yeah, well, thanks for the boat," Qrow replied. I left it where you put it, so . . .”

"Thank you for your consideration. I'll update Mr. Scapegrace's records . . . Is there anything else I can do for you?"

Qrow grunted in reply. "More booze."

The two said their goodbyes, then hung up, and Qrow drove home.

Chapter End Notes

Well, that was a dark ending. But necessary, I think. It shows that this is a world where there are no special prisons for Creatures. It’s similar to GRIMM, where people sometimes have to ignore due process in order to keep themselves and their loved ones safe. I wonder how Weiss is going to feel when she finds out . . .

The idea of runes is something I lifted from my favorite urban fantasy series the ELEMENTAL ASSASSIN series (read it!). It’s a small element, but I like them and the way some of them can have very precise meanings and others have multiple meanings (for example, Gin’s Spider Rune symbolizes patience while Owen’s Hammer Rune represents strength, power, and hard work). As for Ruby’s Rose (cue laugh track), it’s meanings are mostly taken from what red roses are associated with in the real world, at least in the U.S. The idea that it symbolizes health is a reference to the medicinal value of rose hips.

Varian Scapegrace is a character stolen from the SKULDUGGERY PLEASANT books series. I just love this idea of a wannabe serial killer who can’t kill anyone. A lot of his exchange with the teens is taken wholesale from "Playing with Fire." However, in his conversation with Qrow, he also quotes Kirby from BEING HUMAN, another failure of a mass murder. I'm a little embarrassed to be quoting so liberally, but it was a lot of fun, and it really worked for the characters.
Life settled into a kind of pattern for Weiss over the next couple of weeks. She hung out with her friends, read, and dated Ruby. They all talked, joked, got into fights, and made up like friends and couples did everywhere.

Then, Winter’s car pulled into their driveway.

”How did she find me?” Weiss shouted. She was almost hyperventilating. “What did I do wrong?” The white-dyed-black-haired woman ran over every thing she had done over the course over her stay at the Xiao-Long/Rose/Branwen household.

”Shut up, Ice Queen!” Yang shouted, shoving her towards the stairs. “Hide now; worry later!”

The three women scrambled up and into the sisters’ room. They huddled together behind the door, holding each other close for comfort. Weiss had the strange thought that this was how Jews must have felt as they hid from the SS. Was that appropriate given how her sister was aligned with the species version of Neo-Nazis, or Ironically appropriate given her own German heritage. Was this some form of karma?

Ruby's cool hand took hers, and Weiss squeezed it tight. The Vampire frowned, and closed her eyes. Cupping her free hand to her ear (while Yang wrapped her arms around her side) she listened in on the conversation going on below her.

Life for Winter was growing more and more frantic. She spent every day pestering the police. They were decidedly unhelpful, issuing the same platitudes that they were "doing everything they could," which was nothing. She considered hiring private investigators, but dismissed the idea as throwing meat to the wolves; even if they found anything, the poor souls wouldn't live to tell of it. Surprisingly, it was Cardin who provided something to work with.

He still had friends from Beacon High, and he had been speaking to them, and they had been speaking with others. Then, out of the blue, Cardin had walked into the study and told casually informed her that Weiss had been spending her free time during Exam Week with a new, much larger group of friends. Some of these alumnae had seen her out and about with these friends in the time before Weiss had disappeared.

"She was kind of the local ice queen for four years," Cardin said. "I mean, that girl shut everyone down. Then, suddenly she joins the weirdo clique. That's something, right?"

"What do you mean 'the weirdo clique'?” Winter asked, trying to ignore the fact that Weiss had had so few friends for most of her life. Now was not the time to worry about that. Besides, Weiss had friends. She wasn't alone. Now was not the time to worry about this. But why weren't they
speaking to her . . . ?

Cardin had shrugged. "They're a bunch of nerds and wallflowers. Most of them don't hang out with other people. I guess the weirdest thing is that they've got nothing in common. They're a bunch of random people. Different races, different backgrounds, different clubs. I don't know why they hang out together."

Winter mulled such thoughts over in her head. Weiss had been bitten by a Vampire. It must have been done recently, or Winter would have seen them earlier. Weiss had also been spending time with new people. Again, recently. It didn't mean her new friends were a nest of Vampires, but it was a lead. The first one Winter had found since this crisis began.

The elder Schnee ran down the names of people Cardin and his friends could remember seeing Weiss with. This required using Slayer tech-experts to hack the school's computer system to get the addresses. Technically, this didn't qualify as a misallocation of resources. She had a lead on a possible monster infestation. The fact that her main goal was not investigating said infestation but finding her sister was not germane to the situation.

Winter had already interviewed the parents of the friends she knew about. As far as she could tell, they had nothing to hide. Well, the Nikos family might have had something to hide, but they were lawyers; she should have expected them to be stubborn and defiant. Now that she knew Weiss' social circle had expanded so dramatically, she had more options to explore. That was how Winter was pulling into the driveway of the Xiao-Long family. She didn't know much about them, but a deep dive on the records had showed that Taiyang Xiao-Long was apparently a bigamist or philanderer. Granted, he probably wasn't a Vampire; he had too much of a public presence—too many photos on social media—when monsters preferred to keep a lower profile, so as to more easily hunt their unsuspecting human prey. That didn't mean that his children didn't know anything.

"Hello, Mr. Xiao-Long," she said, as soon as the door opened. "My name is Winter Schnee. May I please come in?"

"Schnee? You related to the Tech Company?" Tai asked.

Winter debated for a moment whether or not to tell him. At length, she decided it might earn her some leverage. Wealth could make a person very intimidating or persuasive. "As a matter of fact, my grandfather founded it. I work at the company now, but that's not important. I'm here to speak about my younger sister, Weiss. I've heard your daughters have become her friends."

"I . . . think so," Tai said. "I mean, I recall them making a new friend, but they have so many. It's hard to keep their names straight, you know?"

"I'm sure," Winter said. "May I come in?" she asked again.

"Sure~" Tai drawled, stepping back. "Have a seat."

"Thank you," Winter said as she walked in. She gazed around the room. Inside, it looked like a normal kitchen/dining room. It had a large table, fridge, sink, all the normal things. "Mr. Xiao-Long, my sister is missing."

"Oh, dear," Tai said, frowning. "That's terrible. What happened?"

"She ran away," Winter said. "I'm hoping that since your daughters are her friends, she might have come to them."

"Seems like a good idea," Tai said, "But in case you haven't noticed, I haven't seen anyone new"
around the house. Unless you think my girls are hiding your sister in their closet."

Winter scowled at him. "Do you think this is funny? My sister is missing and could be held captive and . . ." She didn't know what to say. That she might be eaten by monsters? That she might be, be changed into a monster?

"I'm sorry," Tai said. He sighed and looked away for a moment. Winter followed his gaze and saw a large picture hanging on the wall. It looked like a family portrait. Tai was there, standing between two women and holding a blonde toddler and a baby wrapped in a red blanket. A scruffy looking man stood beside one of the women, looking annoyed. "I can only imagine what you're going through . . . I'll keep my eyes open and ask around, but I haven't seen her. Sorry."

Winter looked at him curiously. "Thank you. I would appreciate it, but I was hoping I could speak to your daughters themselves. They are her friends and so they may have heard something."

"I'm sorry," Tai said. "But the girls aren't here right now. They're out with their uncle. But, if you leave me your number I can ask them to call you when they get back."

"I would appreciate it," Winter replied. Her eyes flicked back to the photo on the wall. It looked so . . . ordinary. For a moment, she thought about asking about it, but then she heard a "clink-clink," from around the corner. "What was that?" she asked. Without waiting for an answer, she cautiously moved towards the sound. Her head drifted to her waist, where her jambiya dagger was hidden.

A small squeak was heard, along with the scampering of tiny feet. Relaxing, Winter walked around the hall. "It sounds like you have a rat, Mr. Xiao-Long," she said.

He laughed. "Yeah, I think there's a hole in the attic; all kinds of stuff get in. Rats, crows, all sorts of critters."

"I'll leave you to call the exterminator, then," Winter replied. Resuming her trek to the door, her eyes once more drifted to that picture, but she walked on without comment. "Thank you for your time," she said, before opening the door and walking out.

Tai watched her leave. "Dang," he breathed.

"You feel sorry for her," Qrow said from around the corner.

"Diiiiyyyyyyyyahhhhh!” Tai screeched. “Stop doing that!”

Qrow snorted. "Tai, you were married to two Vampires, you’ve lived with me for years. How does this still bother you?"

"How have you not learned to enter a room without giving me a heart attack?" Tai responder. "Jeez! Ruby isn't like this?"

Qrow shrugged. "Ruby isn’t as experienced as I am," he said, looking a little smug. "Which reminds me . . ." He turned back in the direction of the stairs, speaking firmly. "Ruby! Stop eavesdropping! The grown-ups are talking!"

There was a thump! as the young Vampire slammed her door shut.

Tai chuckled briefly, before giving Qrow a wry look. “So, what happened? If Vampires are so naturally stealthy, how’d we hear you?"

"I can’t help the rats," Qrow grumbled. “Anyway, we gotta text the others. Warn ‘em.”
"I’m a little surprised this didn’t happen earlier," Tai muttered. "I mean, calling her friends is the first thing I would do."

Qrow grunted. "Weiss said her sis was busy all the time. Maybe she didn't know the names of her sister's friends."

Tai shook his head. "That's just sad."

"Yeah, well, worry about that later. Right now we got an ice queen Specialist driving to every one of our friends asking about her baby sister, and you promised the girls would call her."

"Well, what was I supposed to say?"

"I'm not saying you were wrong," Qrow grumbled. "But now we gotta figure out what they're gonna say to her—not to mention what everyone else is supposed to say to when she comes by. We gotta make sure no one says or does anything wrong. 'Cause folks like her, they notice stuff. One of us slips up, it's gonna put a target on 'em. Maybe on all of us."

Winter drove off to the next house on her list, the home of the Arc family. Hopefully, given it was so large, this one wouldn’t be infested with rats.

Winter ran a stop sign and had to swerve to avoid an on-coming car. Rats. There were rats in the house. Rats were known to frequent Vampire nests.

A sick feeling roiled in her stomach. Had she just walked into a Vampire nest? Was that where Weiss was? Were her sister's friends actually blood-sucking monsters?

The picture once more flashed in Winter's mind. The babies. No, they couldn't be Vampires. Vampires couldn't reproduce sexually, could they? She wasn't sure; the Slayers' knowledge on the biology of various Creatures was mostly limited to tracking and fighting. She . . . Winter swallowed. She'd never thought about their conception and birth. Vampires, Werewolves, and Zombies all infected Humans, making their victims into their own kind, but what about the others? Did Ghouls, Dopplegangers, or Wraiths turn humans or, or were they born just like Humans were? Did they go to school? Make friends? Did they laugh and cry like Human babies did? Like Weiss had, when she was young?

Winter was panting now. Pulling over to the curb, she ran her hands over her face and through her hair. She felt like her heart might explode from her chest. Had she . . . ? Was she . . . ? Winter didn't even know what questions to ask. Or perhaps, she was too afraid to ask them.

Back at the home of Ruby, Yang, and (currently) Weiss, an intense debate, of the most serious nature, was taking place.

"Do you think Uncle Qrow has a crush on Weiss' sister?" Yang asked.

"What?" Weiss asked.

"I think he has a crush on your sister," Yang insisted. "He seems to like her."

"She'd kill him on sight!" Weiss shouted.

"Eh, Uncle Qrow might be into that. He's kind of weird."
"She's right," Ruby said. "Uncle Qrow is pretty used to women wanting to hurt him by now."
Weiss frowned. "Why do I think all those women didn’t want to do that before they met him?"
The sisters looked at each other. "I’m pretty sure some of them did," Ruby offered.
Weiss rolled her eyes. "Back on topic, should we tell the others?"
Yang frowned. "I’m calling Blake," she said, getting up and moving to grab her phone.
"Winter will probably go to Pyrrha first, if she hasn’t already," Weiss said. "She already knew we were friends."
"Dad and Uncle Qrow will fall their parents," Yang said. "I can call Pyrrha after this."
"I’ll call Pyrrha," Ruby said.
"Thanks, Sis," Yang said, hitting the CALL button on her phone.
"Anytime," the Vampiress replied. She was sitting at her desk, letting Yang sit on the lower bunk so they would be far enough apart that their conversations wouldn’t get jumbled.
Weiss got up off the floor. She walked over to Ruby knelt so they were at eye level. "I’m sorry," she whispered.
Ruby blinked. "Why?" she asked.
"If I hadn’t run away, if I’d just done a better job hiding the scars, none of this would be happening."
Ruby cocker her head. "Weiss, that doesn’t make sense. You’re not perfect; no one is. You couldn’t know she’d come in while you were changing. What if she’d walked in on you in the shower or while you were sleeping? Or if you had to go to the hospital, and the doctors told her?"
"Even so," Weiss started, but Ruby cut her off.
"No, Weiss! You couldn't keep it a secret forever! And even if she never saw the scars, what about when she notices we aren't aging? I mean, I aren't aging! I'm not! I'm not!"
Ruby was blushing now as she babbled. Weiss' face erupted as well when she realized the implications of Ruby's original phrasing. Her mind returned to what Blake and Yang had told her the afternoon she'd first learned about Ruby's Vampirism—that Vampires typically make their mates into their own kind and that Ruby wouldn't have approached her if the younger woman wasn't considering her "for the long haul."

Chapter End Notes

Sorry it wasn't longer, but I'd like to think there's enough drama in there to make up for the brevity.

P.S.

SilverWolf2135 has started working on "Twilight's Calling," which is the second part in the "Silver Eyed chronicles," series, if you want more monster-versions of RWBY
characters (especially Vampire Ruby).
Chapter Notes

I may have rushed this to get it out before the end of Pride Month. Oh, well. I'm just glad to have published so quickly. I'm heading back to grad school in the fall, and everyone says I'll have less time to do stuff like this, so I have to get as much done while I can. Enjoy.

Winter was crouched in the midst of the trees. She knew this was a risk—hiding outside of a possible Vampire nest at night and with no backup nor anyone even knowing where she was. But she had to; she had to know if her sister was all right. If she told the other Slayers, they would organize a strike team, and that path was too dangerous to consider. If there weren’t Vampires here, she would waste valuable time and resources and lose some level of the respect and trust she’d spent years building up. If Weiss was there, her little sister could get caught in the crossfire.

That was something Winter was trying not to think about. Why would Weiss be staying with Vampires? Presuming she was here at all. It might just be a normal Vampire nest. Or it might just be Humans with a rat problem. There was nothing—

A flash of white appeared in the window.

“Get off me!” Weiss yelled.

The runaway was having a bad day. Hiding from her own sister was bad enough. It was Winter, the person who’d raised her almost like a mother after the death of their actual mother. Hiding from her felt so alien, so wrong. Unfortunately, her sister was also a racist serial killer. This had made Winter’s visit early that morning a little . . . Awkward. The complicated game of phone tag they’d all played afterwards to warn their friends had only made things worse.

And now, her girlfriend’s older sister had just tackled her to the ground as she was going into the kitchen to try to see if she could make a sandwich.

"Stay down, Princess!” Yang hissed. "You're big sis is out there!"

"What?” Weiss asked, freezing. "What are you talking about?"

Yang sat back on her heels and held up her phone. A text message from her sister read "Wntr is spyng." An accompanying text from Blake read "Winter is come," and between the two, it was pretty clear what was going on. "What's she doing? Where is everyone? Is there any danger?"

Yang grunted, stuffing the phone back in her pocket. "Plenty of danger if she's got friends. Ruby, and Uncle Qrow went out to try to spy on her to see what's what. Plus, Blake called and said she was gonna drop by and help out. Between the three of them, they'll find out if she has any friends with them."

"Are they all right?" Weiss asked, her voice a little higher than it should have been. "She's a professional Creature killer! What are they doing?"
"Don't underestimate them, Ice Queen," Yang said. "It's late afternoon, so the worst of the sunlight is gone, especially in the woods out back. Remember, even when the sun's up, Vampires can be silent, and so can some Weres, like Blake. So, they'll all be fine as long as she's on her own, and it kind of looks like it's that way."

"All right. Why is she back? How did they know she was there? Why can only some Weres be quiet and some can't?"

"Yeesh, and I thought Ruby was the queen of motor-mouthing," Yang said. "Weres used to be shapeshifters, remember? Some turned into quieter animals than others, like cats instead of bears. We know she's back, because Neptune saw her drive back this way and park her car on the side of the road. And those three went outside to find out why she's here; weren't you paying attention?"

Weiss ground her teeth. It was, she reflected a good thing Yang wasn't a Vampire. She didn't think she could deal with an eternity of this.

Winter stared through her binoculars at the window, her fingers gripping the observation tool so hard they hurt. Was that Weiss? That could be her skin or her hair. Was it her? Was it her?

Why would Weiss even be here? Her new friends? Why was she with these friends? Did she know they were Vampires? No! If she did, why would she willingly go anywhere near them? But how could she not know what they were after being bitten? What was going on?

Something tickled her throat, and she instinctively reached down to swipe the bug away. Except, it wasn't a bug. Her fingers touched metal, and she froze in place.

"Listen Lady," a voice she recognized from earlier said. "My niece pointed out that your little sister would be very upset if I were to just knock you out, sling you over my shoulders like a sack of potatoes, and take you back inside, so just do us a favor and come quietly, all right?"

Winter ran through her options. She didn't have many. Should could try to fight against a possible Vampire. In the shade. While he had a weapon in hand and she didn't. And he was standing behind her and she was kneeling on stiff legs.

She said nothing. Slowly, she lowered the binoculars and rose to her feet.

"Walk slowly," the voice behind her said.

She did as she was told. She felt the blade stay at her throat as the man behind her followed—

"Dammit."

—until his clothes got caught on some branches. While he was distracted, Winter spun in place and slammed the binoculars into the man’s face. There was a crunch as the plastic and glass broke under the force of her blow. Her enemy crumpled to the ground. He didn’t lose consciousness, though and shook his head to clear the stars. Vampire. Winter drew her dagger and aimed to stab its curved blade into his neck.

That was when Ruby walked the back of her head.

Without Vampiric strength and healing abilities, Winter collapsed face first into the grass.

"Oh my gosh! Oh my gosh!" Ruby fretted over the woman she’d clocked. "AH! She's bleeding! She's bleeding!"
"Calm down, Ruby," Qrow said, getting to his feet. He looked over the unconscious woman. "She's all right. You just broke the skin a little. Nice control."

"Are you sure?" the young Vampiress asked.

"Yeah, she's fine," the older blood-drinker said, pulling some chords out of his pocket. "I notice you didn't seem that worried about me."

"Oops," Ruby said. "Uh . . . Oh, look! It's Blake! Hey, Blake! Where were you?"

The glowing-eyed Were smiled. "I was checking to see if she had any friends in the area. She didn't."

"Good," Qrow said. Finishing tying up the woman, he hefted her over his shoulder. "Now, come on. Let's get her inside."

"Do you have to tie her up?" Ruby asked. "I don't think Weiss will like that."

"Tough luck," Qrow said.

Winter woke up with a splitting headache. She tried to reach up and touch her head, but she couldn't. She tried and tried, but she couldn't lift her hand. As her mind cleared, she began to feel other things, like bindings around her middle. That sent a burst of adrenaline through her veins. Her senses snapping into focus, she began examining her situation at lightning speed. She was tied to a chair in a small, dark room whose window had been boarded up. Her wrists were bound as well as her arms, and her legs were tied at the ankles.

"She's up," a voice called in front of her.

Sitting in front of her in another chair was a young woman dressed in jeans and a t-shirt. She had gotten up to call out the door, so all Winter could see was a crop of short, black hair. But she knew that voice, and when the woman turned around, Winter knew her face, would know it everywhere. "Weiss?" she asked.

Her sister flinched, looking uncomfortable. "Hello, Winter."

"What happened to you? What are you doing here? What happened to your hair?" Each of the questions flew out of her mouth at high speed. It would have been embarrassing if she wasn't so concerned about her little sister's safety.

Weiss fidgeted a little. Her eyes fell down. "I've been staying here," Weiss said.

"Why?"

"We'll be doing the asking for now," another voice said. It was also familiar, but it was much, much less welcome. Qrow appeared leaning against the doorway, looking bored. He pulled a flask from his side and took a swig. Beside him stood Taiyang Xiao-Long.

Winter scowled. "May I ask what I'm doing here?"

Tiayang had his arms crossed. "You're here, because we caught you spying on my house and my family."

"Then why not call the police, rather than taking the vigilante route?" Winter pressed.
Qrow shrugged. "Oh, let's just stop. I'm a Vampire," he pointed to himself, then at her. "And you're a Vampire Hunter. That good enough for you?" Winter's scowl deepened. "I'll take that as a yes."

Tai sighed. "I don't suppose I can ask what Qrow did to tip you off?" he asked.

"I won't give you any information on my comrades," Winter said. "Just kill me already. I won't talk."

Weiss flinched at her sister's speech. On the one hand, she was proud of her sister; she was so strong and brave, willing to die rather than betray the people who trusted her. On the other hand, she had never seen Winter so cold. That seemed like an irony given her name, but despite her stern nature, her sister had always been fair, even kind, to others. Is this the Winter her victims saw before their deaths? she wondered.

Tai sighed. "I hate it when they say that . . . and I'm not a Vampire."

"What?" Winter asked. She actually looked surprised.

"Surprised?" Tai asked. "You saw me in sunlight. I guess you know that they don't burst into flames, but you think I could look that relaxed if I felt like I was burning?"

"Then why are you working with them?" Winter asked. She sneered. "Are you hoping they'll make you immortal as a reward for serving them like a good pet?"

To her surprise, the blonde man laughed. "Nah! If I could be turned, one of my wives would've done it. No, I'm gonna be Human until the day I die."

"What . . . but . . ." Winter couldn't keep her professionalism up. What was the meaning of this?

Tai shrugged. "I know. Weird, isn't it? The odds must've been pretty long. I fall in love with two women, both of them Vampires. They both decide they want to keep me around for a while, but neither of them can sire me."

"Almost sounds like a ballad," Qrow muttered. "Aside from the threesomes." Putting his flask away, he turned to her. "But the truth is, we're not gonna say anything to you."

"We're not?" Tai asked.

"No," the Vampire said. "I've been thinking about this while you were asleep. And, I realized, you won't listen to me or to Tai. So, we won't try. I'm gonna leave that up to her," he said, waving his hand at Weiss. "We'll leave you two to catch up."

He turned and walked out, slapping his hand on Tai's shoulder and dragged him out too.

The sisters sat in silence for a while.

"Why are you doing this Weiss?" Winter asked. "Why are you helping Vampires?"

"Why not?" Weiss asked. "They're good people."

"They're monsters! Do you have any idea what they've done?"

"They've done nothing!" Weiss snapped. "You're assuming that they'll behave like others of their species."
"A perfectly reasonable assumption!" Winter snapped.

"Really?" Weiss asked. "Is it reasonable to assume we want to kill minorities because we’re descended from Germans? Or that we want to steal other people’s homes because we’re white?"


"No," Weiss agreed. “But I’ve seen more humanity from so-called monsters over the past weeks than I’ve seen from some humans . . .” She dropped her gaze and her voice. “Even my own sister.”

Winter didn’t know how to respond to that, but Weiss didn’t seem to want to hear one. The younger woman got up and walked away. “Weiss? Weiss, come back! Weiss! WEISS!"

Weiss actually did pause at the door. She turned back and looked Winter in the eye, before saying. "Winter, there’s something I want to say, a secret I want to reveal, a question I want to ask that I honestly don't know the answer to."

"What question? What secret?" Winter asked, rapidly approaching the stage of hyperventilation.

Weiss smiled, but it was a sad, bitter, heartbreaking smile. "Tell me honestly, what disturbs you more? That I’m dating a Vampire?" Winter gasped. "Or, that I’m dating a girl?"

Chapter End Notes

I’m worried I may have made those last couple of lines a little forced, but this is Pride Month, and it felt wrong not to at least mention our star couple.

I originally planned for this confrontation to happen much later in the story. However, I realized I was just padding things out for the sake of a dramatic confrontation and that just made Winter & Co. look like they didn’t care or were supremely incompetent. Besides, it’s summer break, sooner or later, the kids are gonna have to go to college, which I already have plans for anyway.

So, if you’re a young writer or want to be a writer, remember that this is a dynamic process, and you will have to change things as you go along.

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