

Cinder has a Mid-Life Crisis

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"Headmaster Ozpin please let me-" "Mr Arc, might I remind you that I allowed you in Beacon for a reason despite your transcripts? Besides, I have heard much of your... romances with your team" "Yes-but! I'm going to seriously die! Cinder is a sadist, Pyrrha is a Yandere and while Ruby won't kill me, Yang will!" "I don't see how that's my problem."

Status: complete

Published: 2017-03-17

Updated: 2017-03-27

Words: 64910

Chapters: 12

Rated: Fiction T - Language: English - Genre: Humor/Drama - Characters: Ruby R., Jaune A., Pyrrha N., Cinder F. - Reviews: 122 - Favs: 928 - Follows: 773

Original source: <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/12408358/1/Cinder-has-a-Mid-Life-Crisis>

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Chapter 1

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Chapter 1: Prologue

Cinder Fall was a beautiful woman. Tall, slender with great legs and decent busts on her body, it was no surprise that many men and women fall for her grace and sheer *superiority* in every way. Of course, there were other ways that she was superior to many people that she knew of but she wasn't the boasting type.

With time, her beauty increased. Her figure filled out even more and her hair turned out to be long and luscious in length, thickness and not to mention especially smooth with the care she place in taking care of it.

Yes... with *time* .

That was something she couldn't beat. No matter how well she kept herself, no matter how well Aura seemed to stop aging for the powerful, she was getting *older* . That was unacceptable. Cinder Fall would *never* become a frail old lady that cannot *move* the world where she wished.

She would rather die before that. And perhaps she would, being in the service of the most powerful being in Remnant. *Salem* was much of a driver for perfection as a cruel mistress who punished even the most minor of mistakes with death. She was starting to see why her mistress had no patience for failure.

And most people for what it was worth.

"Mercury" she smoothly managed to *not* snarl, " *Please* tell me why you decided to kill those men. The same men that we needed to

infiltrate Beacon for our plans?"

Kneeling down by force from Emerald was the son of a rather famous assassin. Mercery Black was a rather handsome man and with enough social skill to sound elegant for most women but did not have enough skill to hide the sheer *arrogance* he had sometimes.

No matter his skill (which was quite high), his use was worthless if he didn't follow her orders to perfection. She had no use for people who didn't obey her and especially none that might have caused her plans to unravel due to sheer stupidity.

And he did so in the most extreme way this time.

"I thought..." he started to speak but she could see how his eyes darted around to try to escape else make an excuse for his unforgivable actions against her plans.

Cinder nodded to Emerald and an illusion of his limbs being *ripped off* was shown to him. That was not what she wanted to hear. No excuses. She *simply* wanted to hear how he failed, how he disobeyed her and how he would make up for this and *more* .

"Now..." she droned out slowly for his benefit. "Once again I ask, *why*?"

She could see the dark-skinned servant of hers smirk seeing the boy squirm as another illusion caused him to spam in place. It was quite beneficial for her to collect Emerald all those months ago. Her semblance made punishing *fools* especially easier now that she didn't need to hold back in how they suffered for failure.

"They annoyed me okay?!" he screamed out, "I thought they were stupid so I taunted them a bit. Who would've known that they would attack me out of nowhere? I was defending myself!"

"They might not have attacked if you didn't taunt them" Emerald dug her heel deeper into his back.

"Indeed" said Cinder. "I find it quite questionable that you would decide to throw insults that would make those poor workers *attack* you when we needed them the most for our plans."

"You mean *your* plans you crazy bitch."

That comment ended up with Mercery's face in the ground, eating dirt quite literally. She sighed knowing that she might need to replace him with someone else. Of course she would do so later on when his use no longer concern her but it was always troublesome to find loyal and effective tools for her plans.

Like how Salem found her and train her as one of *her* tools.

"My" she tilted her head looking down on him, not that he could see or she would allow him to look up, "Plans benefits all of us. The moment you came into my service, my plans became your plans and therefore it is *our* plans that you have ruined."

"It would take years before we have a chance to infiltrate Beacon as students and we do not have that time if we want to obtain the Fall Maiden and the rest of her powers" she said to the side.

She did not know what would happen if the maiden died. Would the rest of the power of Fall come to her, would that power transfer to *another* that she would need to hunt down or would the power disappear altogether?

It was much better for her long-term plans as well as *Salem* 's long-term plans that she would have the power of the Fall Maiden before the end of the year. That was the amount of time that she had estimated the former maiden had before she died with the aid of Ozpin and his folk making sure she lived as long as possible.

"You have basically made it impossible for us to 'transfer' into Beacon at the time of the Vytal Festival Tournament when we would be least suspected in being there. As much as the Headmaster

would like to think, security would need to be lax to accumulate many foreign students" she started to rant.

"At the same time, it would be *impossible* for them to spot us and our movements. We could've been able to implant the virus onto their systems to cause chaos. We could've been able to make Vale *fall* . All of which, is now impossible *thanks to you* " she glared.

Mercury might have grumbled about something but Cinder was too distracted in how to salvage her plans.

Then it hit her.

"But worry not Mercury" she leaned down and whispered into his ear. She chuckled seeing the shiver that ran through the boy's body. "There are other methods to get into Beacon. Riskier but nonetheless valid methods for our plans in the end."

Emerald seemed to have gotten it first with eyes wide open in shock and awe at her brilliance, "You mean to *enrol* there?"

"Of course" she said. "If our plan on making use of the cover of the Vytal Festival as transfer from Haven Academy failed, then we just need to use another yet similar method to get what we want. Ozpin would not be suspecting of his own *student* to act against Vale. He is far too trusting and foolish for that."

"Of course that leaves on *who* will infiltrate on this high risk mission. I don't doubt that Ozpin will throw any of us to General Ironwood if we are caught."

A moment past as Emerald allowed Mercury out of the dirt under her foot that was his place and one that held no words.

"I will do it!" the white-haired girl proclaimed with sheer determination and no doubt absolute loyalty to her.

As much as Cinder wanted to use Emerald in this operation, there were simply too many ways things could go wrong without her supervision. Not to mention there were other ways to make use of Emerald's skills to the fullest effectiveness. No doubt those White Fang fools could need an illusion or two to convince them to act on her steed.

"No" she decided, "You are needed elsewhere."

Emerald took the decision with a look of distraught before reaching a strange conclusion, "You mean to have *Mercury* infiltrate Beacon?"

"Of course not" she rebuked. Why on Remnant would she want the same idiot who managed to screw up her plan into another plan that required finesse that he apparently did not have?

Sending Mercury Black to Beacon on his own was akin to literally giving Ozpin the information he needed to find them, their bases, their resources and their *plans* before ripping them all apart while she suffered Salem's rage.

"Then who would-" Emerald's eyes comically widened opened again, "Cinder! You cannot-"

"I can and *I will* " she declared. "Who else could evade the eye of Ozpin? The Fall Maiden is in critical condition and enough time as passed that even the pet crow's information on our appearance would not matter even *if* he saw through your illusions Emerald."

The girl blushed in the praise that was given but Mercury seemed to want to put his metal foot into his mouth as usual.

"Aren't you a bit *old* to play the student?"

Time seemed to *freeze* as Cinder considered *roasting* the fool right now. Indeed, a flame had appeared in her hand and was burning *hot* towards the idiot to *consume* and *devour* his body into *ashes* .

"Please care to repeat that?" she asked *kindly* .

Strangely enough, neither Mercury nor even Emerald seemed to want to answer her. Dismissing them out of mind, Cinder decided she needed to get into Beacon and therefore that was what she would do. It was a simple enough matter to forge some transcripts that are laughing easy to get into Beacon before passing an Initiation test where the Headmaster spies on his students before getting into a team.

And all she needed to do was act like a teenager again to fit right in.

Of course, she may have said all of that aloud judging by the looks of disbelief on her two companions' faces.

"Wow I did not know that you were that delusional" Mercury seemed to want to say. Emerald slapped his arm with enough force it would leave a bruise for a while.

However she still turned and said in a pleading tone, "You don't need to do this. You're... well *fantastic* and umm... people will *notice* your brilliance too much."

Her eyebrow rose to the false words and she couldn't help but to feel *rage* at that they thought that she would *fail* at the task. How dare she say that! There was *nothing* that Cinder Fall couldn't do!

"Emerald" she said slowly, putting down her rage as much as possible, "I'm putting you in charge of dealing with the White Fang. Make sure they're on our side and make sure we have a way to take them all out with ease when the time comes. Mercury, bring your reputation up with the assassins irk and make sure to make connections with Vale's underground. You will deal with Roman Torchwick... actually Emerald will do that."

"Got it boss" he replied without care. She would need to *punish* him the next time he showed such an attitude to her.

However her Emerald still seemed uncertain and that couldn't do.

"Now now, I *can* do this. Have I ever failed before on such a simple task?" she whispered sweetly enough that her servant blushed under her gaze. Love made even the strongest fools to manipulations.

"O-Of course not Cinder!" Emerald naturally was much more agreeable with choice movements to the cheek, face and hips. While she never cared for romance, Cinder did know of techniques to make people putter under her hands.

"But aren't you a bit old to play the student" she heard her whisper.

Old ?

Never mind that. She had other things to deal with aside from her *mature* appearance. Now, all she had to do was get those forged transcripts to slip under Ozpin's radar.

Hei Xiong or *Junior* as his preferred nicknamed managed a club which acted as both an official business and also a window towards his shadier dealings. Not only did he have a number of grunts working for him, he also had a pair of twins that were passable in dealing with Hunters.

Of course, that meant nothing to her *power*. All of them would easily turn into ashes if she would choose. Naturally none of them knew the true scope of her power and she had to settle with a minor level of respect with these... people.

"Cinder!" Junior, a man dressed as a bartender shouted out in surprise. She could already see him sweating. Good.

"Hello *Junior* " she all but purred. As much as it disgusted her, the man liked *dominant* women. Preferably those who dominated him like she did. While distasteful in having such a *willing* slave to use,

she really did need his contacts and connections for her own uses right now.

"What do you need from me" he asked. She could already see those twins to the side, a Melanie and Militia if she recalled their names. If Cinder didn't know better, she would've thought he was using them for less... *savoury* means.

Not that any of the grunts could touch them. They were much too skilled with Huntress-training for any of them to fall in combat to any of them.

"I required forged transcripts" she simply said. The less said about her motives, the less anyone knew about her motives. The man was a sell-out and everyone knew it. It was simple business to try and get information out of him of competitors.

A game of shadows you could say.

"Ah what do you need one for? You know that getting fake IDs for companies like the SDC is difficult at best."

"To Beacon precisely" she added which only caused Junior's face to frown which was strange. There were many who used Junior to make fake transcripts in hopes of getting into Beacon. Those transcripts certainly *do* get them into Beacon but not *in* Beacon.

Initiation was born to weed out of the weak while letting in the strong no matter the background. Why else would Ozpin not care about the false transcripts of so many? She had certainly heard rumours that his pet crow and his bandit sibling didn't have proper transcripts to get into Beacon.

"Is there a problem" she eased the much taller man by gazing her hand over his arm. He submitted easily.

"Nah. Just that there is this young well... *stupid* kid that came in a couple hours ago with the same request. Had no idea what to ask for

and took a while to hash out the details. Good business and money but the kid will likely die in the forest Ozpin has in a few days."

Cinder gave him a look to get to the point.

"If you wish, I could modify his so it's yours" he finally said with a sigh.

"And what reason would you want me to do that? I know you have the resources to just make a new one just as easily" she questioned before smiling. "My, did you somehow get *attached* to the boy? I did not know you swung that way."

Junior blushed but denied it all, "No no *no* . I'm not like Roman with his sick tastes. Just the kid is... earnest in his dream. Way too innocent to be a Huntsman at any rate."

Ah. So that was what he was getting to. The boy seemed to have somehow managed to tug the heart-strings of a man of the underworld of Vale without knowing it. She knew their type. Too innocent, too weak to do anything meaningful or get their hands dirty.

A useful tool when she gets her hands on one.

"And what is the name of this child?" she asked.

Junior looked even more uncomfortable, though that may just be due to the little ball of *molten* fire next to his balls.

"Jaune Arc. Family has a history of Hunters if I remember. Used to be a big-shot family I think" he answered with a grunt.

She tasted the name. Yes, that *might* do. Still it wouldn't do if she couldn't bend someone to use as a cover while at Beacon.

"But I have to ask-"

Cinder glared knowing what the man wanted to ask. She was *not* pleased.

"-Nevermind. Just act... less *you* and you might fit in with the other students. Remember that *most* of the people who get transcripts from my lot are too stupid to think that they don't actually have a chance to get into Beacon or also too stupid to think that they can't get in through other methods or just too stupid to wait for next year" the man seemed to reconsider quickly enough to his benefit.

Not to mention the minor vibe of other information she might find useful. Yes, it certainly made sense for Ozpin to also recruit from those Junior allowed him. Such people showed at least *minimal* skill in searching for information or sheer acting that she could easily find a dozen ways of using such people.

And better yet, these people tend to be either too stupid to know when they are manipulated or skilled enough to get through without issue anyway. A win-win method for the Headmaster for better Hunters if those with more unique roles while also making sure to curb *certain* people from society via 'initiation'.

....Or the old fart was just that stupid to think of the best of everyone.

Either way, it benefited her that apparently there were many who managed to get into Beacon using this method.

"Is there any *more* opinions on how I should act?" she innocently asked while fluttering her eyes. Junior next to her couldn't decide to tell her out of fear or tell her out of her *charm* . Yes, that is what she is calling it.

"... Err... just *never* do that ever again if you're trying to make someone do something for you. That is far more *creepy* on someone your age than on a child" he said before realising what he said. Sputtering out, "Of course, that just means more *adult* methods are suited to you than *trying* to act like a child."

She intended to act like a teenage girl. Was this not the method to do so?

Not to mention that this is the *second* time someone mentioned that she was a bit too *old* to play the student. How was she too old? Her appearance practically was the same as when she was still a teen except that her body filled out more.

Perhaps she could ask those twins on how they act. While she was certain that they were far inferior to her in every way, more opinions and better yet, opinions from idiotic teenage girls was better than asking Junior.

... Was she so disconnected to those younger than her (she was *only* 2* years old!) that she was willing to rely on *Junior* just a moment ago.

Perhaps... Emerald and Mercury had a point

Filing the information she had gotten from the rather strangely eager twins after she somehow managed to bed them, she connected the dots in their words and came to a simple conclusion towards teenagers which spanned into even teenage Hunters.

They act far too emotionally and therefore weren't always rational.

They tend to boast a lot and lack the bite to make them feel safer while kicking other down.

They like impressing people for this 'social hierarchy' often using bullying to do so.

Naturally she dismissed such idiotic things that were the 'social hierarchy' because she was *of course* at the top of any hierarchy. However she did consider the other two points. Teenagers apparently were as smart as she had hoped and often used force instead of *power* to make others submit to them.

There were many ways of crushing a person instead of violence. Female teenage social groups seemed to be less lacking of this than

males though being Hunters, violence in *everyone* was much higher than those without Aura to protect them somewhat.

As such, she moved on to what she wanted to do in Beacon, aside from sabotaging everything she could get her hands on, finding the Fall Maiden and possibly poisoning Ozpin's coffee supply to blend in better.

Once more, she used the opinions and knowledge the twins gave her which were surprisingly bountiful.

She would want to make 'friends'.

And she would want to have a 'lover' or several since she was skilled enough. She didn't know why but apparently teenagers these days would be able to collect several lovers based around their combat prowess.

Although that line of thought *does* make sense of why many young males would want to impress others.

If having multiple lovers made her more powerful in the eyes of others, than she would have *several* ! Or better yet, she could use that Jaune person Junior referenced seem like he has several lovers to make her cover even better.

And better yet, no one would be able to tell that she was older than the others because she was acting *like* them in the end. If she had to have sex once or twice to make things more 'real' then so be it.

A brilliant plan if she could say so.

Too bad Emerald wasn't here. Using her illusions would make it much easier to manipulate the Hunter-student population. Still, Cinder knew she was skilled enough to twist everyone around her finger with a bit of time.

"Oh God, look at that loser."

"I can't believe someone actually managed to get sick just by being on an airship."

The passing two possible Huntresses provided a bit of information and with further information gathering, she managed to get a bare description on this person. Moving with grace, she eventually found a tall blonde vomiting in a trash-can.

Well it seemed that she had found Jaune Arc and from what she found, she was *not* impressed. The boy was wobbling with an unbalanced walk. Even common thugs could trip him over not to mention his seeming weakness as air-sickness was just plain... random.

Cinder could not find herself surprised that he was a cut weaker than everyone else on the airship.

While he was tall, taller than she was in heels, his figure was quite lithe if she had to describe it. While this was not that rare even among Huntsman, the way his body moved spoke of how untrained his muscles were. He would be easily overpowered by even Huntresses that usually specialise more in speed than power techniques.

Not to mention she found he was lacking the trace of Aura that everyone else had from her observation of a *minor* bruise that hadn't gone away from the beginning of the multi-hour flight till now.

He had no *Aura* .

He was practically a *civilian*.

He was especially *stupid* .

At that moment, she had *doubts* she could use him effective. But such thoughts disappeared as she realised how much *easier* it would be for her cover if the one covering her did not know what he would be hiding.

Therefore Cinder had little doubt that she could manipulate him into something she could use. She almost salivated at the thought of not just collecting another tool but *making* one, *forging* useless materials into something *better* .

After what she would do this boy, no one would say that Cinder Fall could not *build* as well as *destroy* .

Pyrrha Nikos was alone in a compartment in the Bullhead. She was here willingly as she feared that there were a few people who recognised her and would quickly try to strike up a conversation with her.

"Oh my god, you're Pyrrha Nikos!"

"Please teach me how to fight! If it is you, I can definitely become famous!"

"Can I get your autograph?!"

While... she didn't exactly mine the fame that came with her championship and the title of 'invincible girl' as they were recognition of her own skill in combat, what she did mind was the constant barrage of strangers coming up to her as if they were friends while trying to manipulate her for their own gains.

In the past month along, there were dozens of *marriage* proposals all promising a life of wealth and luxury without anything else to back their word or even try to interest her besides shallow words. In the end, she was tired of her fame and went to Beacon in hopes that she would get a fresh start.

Looking back on it now, it was a mistake to win those tournaments without a single lost. What little friends she had whittled down to nothing as they left or tried to use her in the end. And after that... was a life without friends but many strangers that all said they knew what was best for her.

Therefore she left.

She didn't want to be Pyrrha Nikos, *Champion* and *Invincible* as the media proclaim her to be. She just wanted to be Pyrrha Nikos, friend, Huntress and a normal person with normal hopes and dreams.

However it looked like even going to Beacon was starting to be a mistake as well. She had heard of how Beacon managed their Hunters, how the teams they would be in would become as close as *family* in the end.

Now...

Now she placed her hopes in that she would meet at least *one* person that could see through everything and recognise her as a normal person. It wasn't like there were people who would actively stalk her here right?

Jaune Arc was more familiar with the many trash cans on the airship than actual people on the same airship at this point. From the moment it lifted into the air, he could feel that his stomach did not agree. It did not agree at all and it was making it all more apparent to him that it did not for several hours now.

It was a mistake to have that large meal prepared by his mum for his trip to Beacon. All of that food was now being vomited out of his mouth with every passing other minute.

This meant that he had no time to actually *talk* to someone, not that many people wanted to associate with him either way. In the village Jaune was... not popular. However this just meant he had a second chance at Beacon!

He was going to be a Huntsman! A hero! Someone who could protect people just like his grandfather did and countless of his ancestors as well. It was his dream and he was prepared to risk his life to do so.

Jaune wasn't stupid... not *that* stupid. He knew that fighting Grimm was a danger and he might die at any moment. That was why he took his family's old sword and shield. Concealed it with him to Beacon. However he also knew that his family didn't approve of him going to become a Hunter.

'The job is dangerous. You are risking your life for nothing', they say.

So he ignored them and prepared as best he could. Even if he didn't actually get in with his own *merits* this was still a school, a place for learning and what better place to learn how to be a Hunter than a place for *Hunters* to be trained?

It wasn't like they actually believed that everyone could be skilled enough to be a Hunter *before* they actually get into this school right?

Ruby Rose was excited for her first day of Beacon. She was scared and afraid that she would need to leave her sister as she moved on due to the separation of their ages but the incident of Roman Torchwick and Headmaster Ozpin letting her into his school early dashed all of her worries!

"Hey little sis. Excited for your first day?" her older sister in *too* many ways teased. It wasn't fair! Yang's body was just so... developed and *tall* that she could press her breasts on her head.

She needed to drink more milk. She was a later bloomer. A *late bloomer* ! Eventually, she would have a body so much better, taller, and fuller than even her sister in time. She was just... fifteen so that was years away.

Still, she was more than glad that she was with her sister now. Ruby had worried that eventually even Yang would move on without her. Mum had died, dad pretty much shut down almost completely after that, not even looking her in the eye and uncle Qrow was rarely home to teach her how to fight.

Yang was always there.

And now, she would *always* be there even when they were at Beacon.

A team with her sisters and two others, doing adventures and protecting lots of people was practically a dream come true for Ruby. But it was just a dream still. As much as her teachers praised her for her talents, the other students... weren't as on good terms with her as she wanted.

Her sister had *friends* .

Ruby had her Crescent Rose for company as she fiddled around to inch that extra percentage of effectiveness out it.

Therefore Ruby had another resolution. She would make friends! How hard could it be? They were all Hunters-in-training and all of them were training to become strong enough to deal with all that the evil Grimm could dish out.

It wasn't like Beacon to accept people who didn't want to actually become protector of people, *Hunters* in their halls right?

A/N: New series! Woot! And I almost finished writing this one before I even posted a single chapter (10/12 chapters written so far)

As you can see, 'Cinder has a Mid-Life Crisis' is a comedy... of sorts. Kinda. Maybe. Okay I admit I have *no* idea on how to write humor. I need to revise Chapter 6 onward heavily after I finish writing the final chapters (need groundwork to revise things to begin with) so if I suddenly stop this daily chapter post thing I'm doing to do for 5 days straight then you know I'm editing stuff.

Honestly, I had intended to remove the *concept* that Salem exists for this series to work but I'm a sucker on making things

harder for me to write out. Of course, Cinder doesn't actually rebel against Salem at the beginning... well I still have no idea what I'm going to do for the epilogue concerning them. Maybe I'll have her actually rebel, go in hiding or play the role of spy in the end.

Of course, there are *other* characters that this series will be focusing on and I seem to have unintentionally gave more focus to the other three members of her team than intended. Well, like I said, chapter 6+ needs a lot of revision on my end (especially since those chapter are Beacon chapters). I prefer to have the chapter usually 2/3 Cinder perspective and 1/3 everyone else but... yeah, need to work on that.

That and I might want to add in Emerald and Mercury's perspective as well.

Note that the chapters are pretty short. Above 4K words but under 5K words. This also means I'm skipping a number of things. Well just for a bit of a spoiler, Forever Fall for one. Really don't like how many times I read Cardin do something crap to Jaune/another character so I might as well skip it but mention it later.

Also, the dot points of how this series was structured were a lot funnier in dot points than in actual reality.

Chapter 2

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Chapter 2: Butterfly Beats

"Today is not my day..." stumbling off to the side, Jaune started vomiting out his stomach once again.

If he continued to do this, he would probably get a horrible nickname like 'vomit boy'... if he hadn't already gotten it by letting out his lunch on the shoes of that pretty blonde. He was thankful enough that the girl didn't beat him to a pulp. He knew that shoes were one of the things that girls liked a lot from his sisters.

Still, it only took him a minute for his body and stomach to stabilise into something that he could deal with. That minute was also the amount of time for everyone else on the airship to leave without him, going ahead.

"More importantly, where... is everyone?" he wondered. There were people here and there but the main crowd that were new students weren't anywhere he could see.

Paling slightly, he realised that he was already lost and it hadn't even been a minute since he had stepped into Beacon! What was he going to do now? Was he going to be kicked out because he couldn't follow everyone?

"Damn it! I can just figure out where to go on my own" he growled, though it was a weak one. He had never been the type of person to just blame others for his own problems. Usually those problems were because of him and everyone knew it.

Therefore, looking up at the large building at the centre of his vision, he figured that if there was anywhere new students would gather to, it would be towards the overly large main building of Beacon.

But then, something caught his vision.

"Wait is that a girl there?" he saw a girl with some red cape or cloak in the middle of the path doing nothing. Perhaps she would know the way to the other new students. It wasn't like everyone he would meet would be lost or new students like him.

Though he had to question on what she did to end up in a cater like that. Were there random caters around Beacon?

"Hello there" a voice next to him caused him to turn his head from the red-girl to a stunningly beautiful woman. She was a bit shorter than he was which was a bit surprising but more importantly he could see the curves of her body and her *breasts* !

His jaws dropped slightly seeing such a person would talk to *him* of all people.

"H-Hello" he meekly replied.

While he was more or less used to talking to girls thanks to his sisters, he still struggled to talk to people outside his family in general without making a fool of himself. That and he was a teenager who was in the presence of someone very attractive even if she wasn't exactly his type.

"Do you perhaps know where new students are supposed to go? I'm afraid I'm a bit lost" she asked.

The good thing is that she had enough confidence that he knew the answer. The bad news, he actually didn't.

"I... actually don't know either. I'm a bit lost as well" he admitted with shame.

Jaune was expecting the attitude of this woman to change when he said that. One of his sisters mentioned there were some girls who used their looks to get men to do what they want and if they can't...

"Oh, my apologies then. Would you like to search together?"

It was like a dream came true. But the red-cape girl looked as lost as he was and he couldn't call himself Jaune Arc if he let a girl like that alone... even if it meant angering another one.

"Sorry but I have some business before that" he said trying not to express how much he *did* want to search around with her.

The woman pouted before sliding her hand off his shoulder, "Too bad."

A few seconds later, the blonde remembered what he was supposed to do. Think about helping red-cape girl and not the fact that he blew a chance to be with a hot woman. Think about helping red-cape girl and not the fact that he blew a chance to be with a hot-damnit!

Why the hell did he do that?

He could've talked to her! Even gotten her scroll number! He wasted such a chance.

"Damn I'm an idiot... this is the reason why even my little sis mocks me when I fail" he grumbled.

Still, if a woman like that could talk to him (and possibly flirt with him), what was anything else?

Hell he might be able to flirt and *succeed* next time round.

It was official. This was probably the *worst* day of her life recently. Not only had Yang disappeared to catch up with her 'friends', she

had accidentally bumped into this crabby girl before accidentally blown up from dust alighting.

"Oh gosh, I hope Yang *never* hears about this" she moaned. She knew her sister would tease her for this for *nights* .

Worse, it wasn't even *her* fault that the last explosion happened! All she did was cause herself to be flung into that white-haired girl's luggage before she started berating her for no reason! So what she was a bit young for Beacon, it wasn't like the Grimm would care how old you were when they attacked you.

Then that girl took out one of her dust vials and started waving it into her face causing her to *sneeze* . A sneeze caused a dust explosion. If her luggage was secured as that girl said it was, the damn vial wouldn't have been loose enough that a sneeze could make it blow up! She didn't even help her up and just left!

Still, the black-haired girl that name herself as Blake seemed nice enough that she wasn't against Ruby but she had casually left as well. Ruby had some hope that she might become friends with her with time as well. But not that *Weiss* person.

"Geez, it makes me angry just thinking about it" she clenched her fist before looking tired.

Not only did she not make any friends, she made a *negative* friend. An enemy not even an hour on Beacon. This... really couldn't have gotten worse.

"Hey I'm Jaune" a tall blonde approached her and lent her a hand. For some reason, he seemed familiar with him.

"Hello" she replied pulling herself up. At least *he* was nice enough to help her up. Unlike some people, it looked like there were still people who at least acted like gentlemen. Well, gentlemen that would like to do *things* to her according to Uncle Qrow.

Not that he would tell her what they would want to do to her by acting now.

Smiling in a goofy way, the older boy introduced himself more formally ending in a slight bow, "Well the name's Jaune Arc. Short, sweet, rolls off the tongue, ladies love it."

"Do they now?" Ruby couldn't help it. She giggled before she realised where she recognised him.

"Aren't you the guy who threw up on the ship?" she asked. The blonde looked startled at those accusations and she was a bit interested in his reaction to that. Not to mention she was a bit curious on why would be *that* bad with air-sickness that he would practically spend the flight near trash-cans.

Jaune groaned placing his face in his palms, "Please don't tell me that a bad nickname already spread for me."

She gave him a sympatric look but still said, "Sorry, you're forever known as 'Vomit Boy' as long as you reside in Beacon" while patting his shoulder... after toeing up higher. Why was he was *tall* ?

Even so, she caught the glint that appeared in his eyes before he shot back, "In that cause you would be known forever as 'Cater Face' then. Don't think I didn't see how you manage to somehow explode like that"

Her face suddenly turned red from both embarrassment and rage to that comment.

"You... saw that?"

"Yep" he grinned, "Never going to let you forget that as well. It's not every day that I have ammo against other people."

"Ammo?" Ruby tilted her head slowly in confusion, "What does having ammo have anything to do with this? Oh are we talking about

our weapons now?"

Jaune looked startled but seemed to agree with a nod.

Seeing the confirmation Ruby almost squealed with *glee* before bringing out her precious weapon in her hands to show off to Jaune. He looked curiously at it before asking, "So... what is it?"

"This-" she grinned before pressing the trigger to shape-shift it into its scythe mode with the blade sticking out and piercing the ground with ease, "Is Crescent Rose. My *precious* weapon that I made with blood and sweat. Took me years to properly configure it into something I can use to hack Grimm apart."

"That's..." Jaune gulped and Ruby could *tell* that he was surely impressed, "Is a very big weapon. How do you actually move it without swinging your body with it?"

Oh, that was a question she got more than she could care.

"Simple. I trained in using it all my life which helps a lot. Strength training is important for using a cool weapon like this. Besides that-" she pointed at the end of the weapon, "It's also a customizable high impact sniper rifle. I use my shots to push my body faster and faster forward before I cut into things. I'm pretty sure I've *exploded* a Beowolf's head with a single shot of this baby before."

Now Jaune was *stunned* which was a good sign that he recognised her sheer awesomeness. She decided to tell him *more* of what she could do with her beloved weapon. Oh... wasn't that what *friends* do?

"Jaune are we friends now?" she suddenly asked. Ruby knew that this was out of nowhere but she *needed* something to confirm what she thought. She really didn't have many or any friends aside from her sister after all.

All she got was a numb nod back.

Were... they friends now?

YES!

Her first friend and it wasn't even an hour yet. Wait till Yang hears about this. It'll show her that even she can make friends on her own.

"Yay!" her shout seemed to have snapped her friend out of the trance he seemed to be in. She didn't blame him. Crescent Rose would naturally make others stunned like that. Ruby was glad she chose a good friend.

"Anyway, what kind of weapon do you have?"

Jaune flushed before showing off a sword in a sheath before explaining, "Nothing as complicated as your weapon. Crocea Mors is just a normal sword with a sheath that doubles as a sword. A family heirloom from the Great War actually."

Inspecting the weapon, Ruby was surprised that the blade was still this polished with no rust. But as a weapon from that era, it hadn't been integrated with some of the more modern addition, namely guns.

Almost every single melee weapon these days also doubled as ranged weapons or the other way around. Jaune would be of a bit of a disadvantage if he didn't get a new weapon. Although that may just be because he was that much better in close combat than the average Hunter-in-training.

"Nice. Not many people just use a sword and shield these days but the basics are pretty important" she said.

"Ah... yeah" for some reason, Jaune seemed to be really hesitant for some reason. Ruby quickly, using her fifteen year old mind figured the reason why.

He was... *embarrassed* . The sheer awesomeness of Crescent Rose made his own weapon look inadequate! Oh now, even though his Crocea Mors didn't have much on her own beloved, it was still a fine weapon.

She was quite sure it was made from rare metals and that along with the craftsmanship being the core reason it hadn't rusted till now!

"Don't worry about it Jaune!" she said full of confidence, "Crocea Mors *is* a good weapon to have."

"Yeah" he agreed, "And your Crescent Rose I think is the most frightening weapon I have ever laid my eyes on."

She blushed to the praise and slapped his arm slightly.

"My, you're just saying that. Do you think I'm *cute* with it?" she teased. Ruby grinned the same way her sister did when she toyed with boys her age. Although she didn't have her figure, she did have her decent looking face!

She remembered something about getting a boy around her figure this way.

"Of course, you are pretty cute" Jaune nodded which only caused Ruby to blush even more. Abort! Abort! She had *no* idea how to deal with someone complimenting her this way. She started squirming in place before the blonde looked at her strangely and started reaching out to-

"What do you think you're doing?" Yang Xiao-Long growled grabbing Jaune's arm before *squeezing* . Jaune winced at the grip and looked like he was about to explained but her sister didn't let him.

"Ruby" Yang turned her eyes to her, "Do please be careful. There are *some* people who would want to take advantage of you."

"But he wasn't! All he did was call me cute and complimented me!" she protested.

Seeing her sister's eyes flash red... Ruby realised she may have made a mistake. Jaune started screaming just as Yang was about to beat him to a pulp with just her fists and Ruby immediately moved to save him.

"Wait-JAUNE!" she shouted.

Activating her semblance, she quickly and *barely* managed to grab him out of harm's way. The fist barely missed him and she managed to save her friend from being beaten up. She knew more than most that Yang was actually quite strong even for Hunter standards.

Unfortunately, her new friend still had his sword in his hand and the sheath nicked Yang's *hair* by a centimetre when he was waving it around while she was grabbing onto him.

"... You "

Ruby gulped to see that Yang's eyes turned completely blood red and her hair was on fire now. Crap. Her sister was in her enraged state. Every time anything managed to even harm her hair in the slightest, Yang would go berserk.

And although she had never outright attacked Ruby even in such a state, she wasn't going to bet that she wouldn't harm Jaune just because he was in her arms right now. Therefore she did the most logical thing she knew.

"Jaune! Run!" she screamed while pushing the blonde away while using her own body as a shield.

She hoped that her sister wasn't angry enough that she would even attack her.

Cinder looked in amusement when three people entered the halls where the other students gathered quite late. Two of them were blonde and the last was wearing a red cloak. But the most noticeable thing about the trio was that the male blonde was burnt in several places while the other female blonde was apologising to the other two quite frantically.

Of course, she knew what happened. She helped cause it to be after all.

Jaune Arc seemed to get it in his head that it was a *fine* idea to flirt with the 15 year old, prodigy Ruby Rose not knowing that her older sister, Yang Xiao-Long was quite protective of her. Of course, this would normally lead to the older blonde to threatening her potential tool but then young Ruby decided to 'save' her new friend.

That led to poor Jaune cutting a bit of Miss Xiao-Long's hair off causing her to become even more enraged. The next ten minutes was then filled with explosions, flames, screaming (from Jaune) and *lots* of destruction that she wouldn't be surprised if they would be punished for it later.

As a naturally talented person, she spotted this happening a mile away. Quite literally since she was spying on what was happening and she knew a few others were watching the scene play out as well. It was too bad none of them saw the 'potential' of the Arc. He was surprisingly adept in surviving what would be his immediate death if a *single* blow from Miss Xiao-Long hit him.

Without Aura, he would've at best gotten through with broken bones and crushed organs for months if he somehow managed to survive the trauma.

She positioned herself to hear more of their conversation.

" *Yaaaang*... did you have to try and kill Jaune like that?" the young Huntress whined. She noted that even her cloak had some burn

marks in several places. Probably by being too close to her sister's attacks.

"Hey! It's not my fault I thought he was taking advantage of you" Yang (Thinking her as Miss Xiao-Long was tiring) protested. She swung around and hugged the back of Ruby's body. Jaune looked very interested in the sight for a moment before looking away when he got stares in return.

Cinder grinned seeing how much easier it would be to manipulate him if *that* was what distracted him. The sisters were actually attractive but she was much more even if she lost slightly to the sheer figure the blonde had.

"I'm sorry?" Jaune said scratching his cheek, "Have you *seen* the weapon she carries. I almost pissed myself just by seeing it. That is probably the most dangerous and lethal weapon I have *seen* ."

Both of them looked at Ruby who was cuddling her weapon, disturbingly enough. Even Mercury wasn't that... desperate to do the same to his metal legs.

"Hehehe. Crescent Rose *is* magnificent in *every way* " Ruby purred.

"Ruby I think that wasn't a compliment... aaaaand now I'm starting to think you misunderstood what you think Mr Blonde here said to you. And I'm starting to think that you're first boyfriend will be your weapon and not an actual person" said Yang with a deadpan expression.

Ruby huffed before declaring, "Crescent *Rose* is naturally female. Elegant and lethal, just like me."

"I am questioning my choice in friends" Jaune looked very disturbed now. Cinder was too and that was saying a lot. She had seen many obsessions that went from collecting virgin girls to swimming literally in gold but one that involved a weapon that deeply was a rare thing.

" *I'm* questioning the sanity of my sister. I do wonder what you said to make her think you said she was cute" she shot a look to Jaune.

"He actually told me I was cute" Ruby admitted quietly.

"...."

" *That* I admit but that was only *after* she showed me *that* weapon and asked if I thought she was cute" he raised his arms in surrender. Yang was shooting Jaune another glare and was cracking her knuckle threateningly.

"You're a bit too easy to threaten" deadpanned Yang.

" *Lots* of reasons for that. Haven't actually gotten many chances to do things without someone pushing me around my whole life" Jaune sighed.

That comment... actually boded well for Cinder if she managed to partner with this Jaune Arc. He was weak, weak-minded and was easily enough manipulated for her plans. And from she could derive, he was also *used* to being pushed around that it wouldn't be new for him if she commanded his every move.

That way, even keeping her true age from him was simple. Was she focusing on her age too much? Not at all. She was perfectly within the age range of the other students here.

And compared to the other dozen people who *also* forged their transcripts into Beacon this year, *he* was the better partner as far as she was concern. Most of the others would eventually figure out her schemes due to proximity.

She would've made up her mind on her choice now if she hadn't before.

Cinder Fall was going to become Jaune Arc's partner in Beacon because of how incompetent and easily manipulated he was... and

wasn't *that* a sad thought.

Pyrrha Nikos woke up and prepared for the morning. Slipping out of her sleeping bag, she unpacked her clothes and armour before bringing her sleep-wear into the bathroom to change. Having a massive sleepover in a room full of strangers was a first to her and it was an interesting experience.

There were a couple of males that wanted to 'pick her up' but fortunately most of them were deterred when she refused them. The rest were further deterred by the sheer number of Huntresses in the area she was sleeping at. Still it didn't stop some of the girls to try and pick up some of the boys. Really, she didn't blame them for acting like this. This was probably the last time in a long time that they would be allowed to act like this.

While they were all training to become Hunters, they were still teenagers.

And at Beacon, they were expected to become something more than mere teenagers. With the power of Aura and many skills, they were expected to become the protector of people. They were expected to become *Hunters* that would safe-guard the world for the next generation. There was no room for 'fun' when you stepped into such a world.

It was one of her hopes that if she became a Hunter, those later associated with her would not care of whom she was before. So far, it was good. While the other girls she slept near didn't actively seek her, she really didn't connect to them. Make-up and other girly things were abandoned at a young age to train to get stronger.

"Still, I hope that my future team will be people I can relate to" she mused.

Hopefully none of the people she would be on a team with for the next four years would be bad people. Despite being the best

Academy in the world for Hunters, there were still people who would hide their intentions to gain power for their own gains. Even in training, she feared that there were some that thought themselves above others already.

She did not like the look of that one girl with a too sharp gaze. She too was peering at the group from yesterday that made a racket.

She shook her head. There was no need to antagonise something based off what her impression of them was. The reality might be that the person she saw was in fact one of the kindest people she would ever meet. Still, Pyrrha suspected that there was something else going on and it was one of her carefully honed instincts that told her so.

Or it was her hormones. The unfortunate fact was that they were all still *teenagers* . Even she couldn't help but to let her eyes move across some of the boys 'playing' around just before the sleepover without shirts. Sure she was serious with her training and goals, but being at the age where emotions were most heightened, she suspected she would struggle to control certain urges sooner or later.

One would think that it would be the opposite.

In fact, it was just like what happened to that decent looking tall blonde that somehow managed to be in the middle of an argument of a pretty white-haired girl against a busty blonde girl and what seemed to be her younger sister despite the differences in their looks. He couldn't even get a word in even though he seemed like the decent kind.

'Still, it was surprising to think that the blonde girl and short one are sisters. If I didn't know better I would've though the blondes were related instead' she thought. Right now she was brushing her teeth.

It was too bad she didn't catch their names; she had a feeling that they would've been people who would've accepted her as she was

and not what she was famous for. It was quite an argument that they had. Pyrrha was sure that almost everyone heard the shouting.

Packing up her things, she decided to store her things in her locker until she would have a room with the rest of her team.

But when she got there...

"So Pyrrha, have you given any thoughts on whose team you would like to be on? I'm sure everyone is eager to be united with such a strong well known individual such as yourself" said a familiar white-haired girl was standing next to her locker.

Wasn't she one of the girls that had gotten into a shouting match?

She believed... her name was *Weiss* ? She was related to the SDC, probably a member of the Schnee family if she recalled.

"Hmm, I'm not sure. I was planning on letting the chips fall as they may" she replied. She wasn't good with these kinds of people. Still, it is rude to not respond to her so Pyrrha spoke the first thing that came to her mind.

"Well... I was thinking maybe we could be on a team together" said Weiss.

Oh, so this was what this was for. As someone who is famous for being strong, there was probably no more coveted partner if you were to base on combat skills alone. Considering that she was as strong as perhaps even the upper year students, it wasn't surprising that some would come to her with that kind of intention.

It seemed that with no one else asking for her for this, she had falsely believed that no one would come up to her with such a request. Still, Pyrrha naturally slipped into a smile like always. She was *trained* to smile and talk politely to people.

"Well that sounds grand" she absently replied. She really didn't care and at the same time suspected Beacon had a method to prevent people from being forced to partnered up with those they don't like.

It wouldn't do for a team to die because a pair didn't get along with each other.

"Great!" the other girl looked extremely happy for this answer.

Pyrrha restrained her disappointment and still had hopes that someone would answer her unsaid plead for being treated as a normal person.

"You! You're the mean person Ruby mentioned!" a voice to the side called. Both girls turned and said a familiar blonde person in white chest-armor who was pointing his finger at Weiss.

"What? *You again!* " Weiss looked confused for a moment before her face turned enraged.

"Hello" Pyrrha waved politely.

"Yeah yeah", the boy seemed to ignore her with a dismissive wave before paying his attention to Weiss, "So Weiss, I couldn't but to hear that you're trying to get this poor girl into your team."

"So what? It has nothing to do with you" she snared with a glare.

"It may be because I know that people would want to be on a team with me. Still I don't mind if you want to be on my team Snow Angel" he flexed his arm. He was quite confident at least.

... And he seemed to have a strange relationship with her already. Was he on good or bad terms with her? He also seemed to have an impressive that teams were made up of only partners.

Pyrrha decided to correct him, "Actually I think the teams are comprised of four students each so-"

"You don't say" he quickly cut her off before approaching her, "Well hot-shot, play your cards right and you may end up on the *winning* team."

A small hope appeared in Pyrrha's heart. Perhaps he didn't know who she was.

Weiss immediately moved to move both of them away from each other.

"Jaune is it? Do you have any idea who you are talking to?" Weiss asked. That hope increased with the confused look on 'Jaune.'

"Not in the slightest Snow Angel" he replied smoothly.

Weiss seemed to smirk at that moment before introducing her, "This is Pyrrha-"

"Hello again" she cut in and waved again.

"Pyrrha graduated at the top of her class on Sanctum."

"Never heard of it" the reply was the same.

"Ah. She had won the Minstrel Regional Tournament four years in a row. A new record!"

"The what?" another confused look appeared on his face.

"She's on the front of every Pumpkin Pete's Marshmallow flake's bar" that time, a look of recognition appeared over the blonde's face. Of all things, *that* was what he knew her from. Actually... that was a good thing in her books.

Jaune gasped pointing, "That's you? They only do that for star athletes and cartoon characters"

"Yeah, it was pretty cool. Sadly the cereal wasn't very good for you" she blushed slightly to the new feeling. Not many people would even

associate her with the cereal branding.

"So after hearing all of that, do you really think you're in a position to ask *her* to be on your team?" Weiss asked again.

Pyrrha looked sadly as Jaune got depressed and muttered out, "I guess not, sorry."

It was then, whether out of sheer rebelliousness to Weiss's words or own hopes that she could partner up with someone who she could talk to as a normal person, she decided to clear him up, "Actually Jaune, I think you would make a great leader."

And it was strangely dazzling how he smiled slightly and how his eyes lit up to even the simplest praise. Something... she had been missing for a long time now.

"Actually I haven't heard you introduce yourself yet. My name is Pyrrha Nikos" she said ignoring the looks Weiss was giving them.

"Hello. My name is Jaune Arc. Nice to meet you Pyrrha!" there was little recognition in his eyes. As far as he knew, she was a *normal* girl.

It was then, that Pyrrha Nikos decided Jaune Arc would be her partner.

A/N: Jaune's relation to Weiss is a bit different than normal. Cinder's well... boost in confidence ended up causing him problems as he got too confident with Ruby and decided to *try* and flirt with... when Yang appeared to see where her sister was thanks to Cinder. Yeah, problems happened there.

While Jaune thinks Weiss *is* attractive, he's under the effect of Cinder who is both attractive and actually treated him better than she did at the moment. She wasn't exactly the kindest person when Beacon started and combined with Ruby's

experience with her, it really didn't the 'angel-like' impression to make him completely smitten with her.

This of course led to Jaune not wanting to *actively* want Weiss on his team which a bit new. Still didn't change the fact that he was trying to flirt with her if not as much as what Canon did. And of course, with Jaune not being super-creepy and clingy to Weiss, Pyrrha had no need to ping him to the locker via her weapon.

Next chapter is initiation and I admittedly had a lot of fun with that.

Chapter 3

Disclaimer: I own nothing of RWBY which belongs to Rooster Teeth and the late Monty Owm.

Chapter 3: Where Jaune finds a Landing Strategy (by being speared to a tree)

Ozpin scanned the students standing in front of him. Many of them are the most skilled students that have been trained at an early aged. Some of them are the true elites that will be at the forefront against the darkness known as Grimm.

And a few, a select foolish few are those who are neither but still have the courage to do what is right despite their own lacking. All of them are students that he would be proud to have at Beacon, if they manage to survive and finish initiation. There is no difference between the skill, unskilled and elites on a battlefield. Death is equal to all and as such he would judge them all equal right now.

This was his first lesson to them all.

Live.

If they cannot survive now, then they have just wasted their time. That is the reason why he chose to allow those with... suspicious backgrounds into his beloved school. Of course, those who have the intention to harm are not allowed him but everyone else? The greedy, foolish or otherwise, he would accept them all.

Take Jaune Arc standing nearest to him, child of the famed and long time since degraded Arc Family. Unskilled, he had failed to make it into Signal and from all reports, had not even unlocked his Aura. Yet he managed to forge transcripts and made his way here, to his possible death.

The Headmaster hoped that someone would pity him and save his life during the landing strategy.

If anything, his heart was at least in the right place unlike so many others as the years passed.

"For years you have trained into become warriors. Today your abilities will be evaluated in the Emerald Forest" he said.

He got their attention immediately. He had made this speech each and every year and he knew better than most of what students would pay attention to first. You needed to make it sound like a competition. Even if it's the truth, telling them that it is likely some or most of them will die will do nothing but make them underestimate their challenge.

The pride of teenagers that think they can take on the world would lead them to their deaths. It was just better to make them more aware that there is more to this than it seems if it allows them to be more alert and less likely to face impossible odds head-on.

"Now I'm sure many of you have heard rumours about the assignment of teams. Well allow us to put an end to your confusion. Each of you will be given team-mates. Today" he continued to say.

The slight movements and twitches some of the potential students had was all he needed to know that they were nervous. Teamwork was a major part of Beacon's teaching. He knew that even the simplest of them knew that the right team could mean being exceptional or being a failure in the end.

Of course, he made sure to make some minor adjustments to ensure that those not at all compatible would be less likely to meet each other. Cardin Winchester was a known Faunas-hater and it wouldn't do to have him anywhere near one let alone but on the same team as one.

"These team-mates will be with you for the rest of your time here at Beacon. So it is in your best interest to be paired with someone

whom you can work well with."

There were some that were naturally suited to each other. The young Lie Ren and Nora Valkyrie would most likely have a partnership that goes beyond whatever 'official' partner they could have otherwise. Of course Ozpin knew that they could work just as well with other people but it took years to build up the trust they have between them.

It is a similar case with Ruby Rose and her sister, Yang Xiao-Long though in this case, he felt that either of them would work well enough even without each other. It was just better to have those who would all work well with each other no matter the partner to end up near each other.

After that... it was a matter of luck and intention.

"That being said, the first person you make eye-contact with after landing will be your partner for the next four years" the gasp he heard from a select few greatly amused him. It was always nice to see some so naïve that this would be permanent no matter their protest.

It was common to see teams and even partnerships get shuffled around within the first semester. Anything else than complete trust would lead to hesitation in a team and that would lead to people dead.

Why would he want to trap people in a team they don't want? It was only a matter of bringing the issue to him. Those who had the courage to simply ask were reward. Those who don't are left behind.

"See! I told you-" Nora cheered.

He ignored her and went on saying, "After you partnered up, make your way to the northern end of the forest. You will meet opposition along the way. Do not hesitate to destroy everything in your path or you will die."

That was the first warning he gave them. If they could not even follow that, then perhaps it would be good for them to perish in the forest. The world had no need for those with Aura and yet would hesitate even for their own lives.

He turned to Glynda and nodded. She activated the monitoring devices shattered all around the forest. It was a good mission for the students to learn how to navigate through a Grimm-filled forest for a non-combat task. There were many missions that went beyond just killing Grimm.

Many Hunters also took up professions to fix, build and create as well. A Hunter that knew how to fix a damaged communication tower in the middle of Grimm-land was better than a Hunter that didn't.

"You will be monitored and graded for the duration of your initiation. But our instructors will not intervene. You will find an abandoned temple at the end of the path containing several relics."

This was their second warning. The fact that none of the instructors would help them should clue a few in that this was no simple training exercise. They were expected to go through dangerous tasks that may kill them as ordinary tasks over the years as students of Beacon.

"Each pair must choose one and return to the top of the cliff. You will guard that item as well as your standing and grade you appropriately. Are there any questions?" he asked. It looked like most of them understood what he said.

Good.

"Yeah umm sir?" Jaune Arc raised his hand nervously looking unsure on what he had to do. Ozpin wasn't surprised considering his record.

"Good!" he promptly ignored the young Arc. There were times when you needed to do something even without instructions and explanations on what to do.

"Now take your positions" he commanded. The whole line of potential students took their stances, adjusting their bodies so that they would be better air-borne. Air-combat became a thing when it was found that Nevermores were especially more dangerous in the skies than on the ground.

Namely, since humanity started training Hunters.

"Er sir. I have umm a question" Jaune tried speaking again but Ozpin continued to ignore him. The first set of potential students was shot off into the sky. He hoped for the best and that they would survive.

"So this landing... strategy thing, what is it? Are you dropping us off or something?" the confusion would've been a lot funnier if it didn't mean that this young boy would most likely die in the forest without help.

"No. You will be falling" he decided to at least give a partial answer. Even some level of preparedness than none and the young child needed a lot more than that to survive.

"Wow... I see. So, like did you hand out parachutes for us?"

"No. You will be using your own landing strategy" he indulged.

"Uhh huh that" It was a real shame that he wasn't the brightest of people. Perhaps in time he would become better but they might never know at this rate.

"So what exactly is a landing strategy-"

Jaune Arc was flung into the air while screaming. He sipped his coffee before looking at Glynda. Without a word, she opened up several screens to see the landing strategies of many of their potential students.

"Two of the batch from Signal died from poor landings. Another three were injured from the fall but managed to survive. None of the elites

were harmed in landing and almost all of those who used forged transcripts to get in also died" she emotionlessly informed.

As expected, many of the unprepared ones with too much hope and too little skill immediately died from the impact or were injured enough that fighting against Grimm would be difficult at best. They would die there, alone and frightened and at the same time draw away other Grimm from the rest, consequentially aiding them.

He sighed, even if there was one student that could survive initiation when they were no way were skilled enough for it, he would let a dozen more die each time. Training Hunters was a difficult task and it wasn't just being strong or skilled enough to fight Grimm.

"Which ones survived?" he asked.

"Jaune Arc surprisingly enough... Pyrrha Nikos seemed to have taken a liking to him and managed to save him by pinning him to a tree. The only other is a student by the name of Cinder Fall whose... approaching where Mr Arc is quite quickly."

"Interesting..." he took another sip. There may be some hope for him after all. Gathering comrades to aid you was a skill that Hunters also needed to have for leadership after all.

"Well that was tamer than I thought."

After landing gracefully while projecting two hooked swords via her semblance and a bit of dust manipulation, Cinder looked a short look where she was and calculated in her head of the approximate position of everyone else. As expected Ozpin had separated the students flights into places where they would 'best' find each other for teams.

"Hmph! To think that he would dare try to place me with the weak fools" she muttered under her breath.

Of course, the headmaster had no methods on stopping her on rushing to where Jaune was to partner with him. Just as much this initiation was part skill and part luck on who you would partner up with, it was also part determination to seek and find your ideal partner before anyone else.

"No one told me that you couldn't use everything to make sure I would get the perfect partner."

If she couldn't get Jaune Arc, she might as well give up now. Being unable to success even in this simplest task right now would mean that any success later on would be beyond her reach.

And that was unacceptable.

She started sprinting to where she saw Jaune was while avoiding the other students by sensing their head signatures. Even incomplete, the power of the Fall Maiden was quite useful. Eventually she found the blonde pinned by the head of his hoodie to the tree and couldn't help but to chuckle at the sight.

"My my, aren't you in a... particular situation" she smiled at him.

"Please help me. I can't get down" he begged.

Seeing no reason not to especially when they were going to be partners, she using some of the dust she stored, she easily burst the place where the spear stuck to the tree allowing Jaune to fall to the ground. The weapon clanged on the ground uselessly while Jaune scrambled to get up and look more proper in front of her.

Ignoring the sputter he seemed to have when she moved closer to him, well her dress was a bit revealing of her figure, she examined the weapon and noted its quality in craftsmanship. It was rare for a weapon to have a triple-form and be used so expertly.

Picking up the weapon, she noticed that this belonged to one Pyrrha Nikos in fact. So she wanted to partner with Jaune?

Interesting.

"So... are we partners now?" the blonde asked her.

"Of course. We did make eye-contact before anyone else right?" she looked pleased though there were now many more plans running through her head on making sure this boy in front of her didn't discover any of her plans.

First step, make sure it looks like she was helping him.

"My name is Cinder Fall. Nice to meet you partner" she introduced herself politely.

"Right. Yeah. Hi! My name is Jaune Arc, nice to meet you partner" he grinned nervously. It was obviously he was smitten by her beauty. Having another Emerald was always a good thing in her boots.

Of course, him being quickly smitten by her meant that she was in the age that he would be attracted to, not that she was ever not attractive.

It was then that a red-haired girl burst in sight with a look of confusion and dare she say; anger? How amusing for one so young to think she could challenge her. Cinder smirked slightly at her.

Pyrrha gaped at the black-haired woman in holding her weapon. It was too soon. Too soon for anyone else to reach Jaune before her, a fact she made sure to check. Despite this, the reality was that somehow, someone managed to find where Jaune Arc was and partnered up with her already.

"Wa-how?" she sputtered out.

The woman, as her attitude made it impossible for her to identify her as a girl stepped over making sure to swing her hips in the view of Jaune hewashers before handing her Milo... which by the looks of things was pinned to Jaune mere seconds ago. Feeling weak all of a

sudden, Pyrrha felt like the last hope she had for a normal friendship disappear like that.

The chances on being on the same team as Jaune was low but the chances of being partnered with him was almost certain when they had started. No one paid attention to the blonde, she made sure to check. Not to mention she landed near enough to him for her to aim and fire her weapon to save him.

And yet, she failed to get to him in time.

She failed.

"Hello, my name is Cinder Fall. Jaune's partner" the woman named Cinder seemed to have said.

As if noticing her for the first time (and boy did that sting), Jaune waved at her and said, "Hey Pyrrha! Thanks for the save earlier. If you didn't pin me to the tree I might have died!"

Of course that bright smile and innocent look made it all up in her mind. Of course he wouldn't pay that much attention to her, she was a normal girl to him and that meant not being in his centre of attention all the time.

"No problem" she tried to smile to it was a bit strained. Strange, smiling used to be so natural for her... until it wasn't.

Pyrrha stared at Cinder, her face turning into a glare.

Cinder stared at Pyrrha, her face letting out a smirk.

Jaune looked at the pair of Huntresses confused and did what he could to make sure no fighting broke out. He knew those looks well enough by his sisters.

"So... what's the deal with this partner thing? I know we're split into teams of four but what's the deal with the partner thing?" he asked.

Snapping out of whatever held her mind, Pyrrha silently thanked Jaune for not letting her try to attack this Cinder. Even from yesterday, she had a strange feeling from her. That this Cinder person did not fit in with everyone else. No one talked to her, not even some of the boys despite her looks.

This feeling only got worse the moment she found her with Jaune first. The fact that she somehow managed to pinpoint and find Jaune was suspicious enough but the way she presented herself now that she was partnered with Jaune only irritated her. And as much as she didn't like to admit it, she had to thank this woman for the feeling she was having.

It was jealousy. Something that she had rarely experienced after her fame started building up. It was the feeling to want to get better to surpass the person that they envied. And in this case she knew that Pyrrha Nikos was jealousy that Cinder Fall was now closer to Jaune than her.

"While teams are split into four students, the teams are further split into partners of two. By doing this teams can split up more effectively in missions though they are all still lead by a single leader per team" explained Cinder.

"Correct. There are two 'selections' for a team. The first is via partnership as you and... Cinder have done and the second is possibly via the collection of relics in some fashion" added Pyrrha.

"I see... so this means Cinder is on my team but you might not be?" Jaune looked confused.

"Yes, that is correct Jaune" the raven-haired woman gazed her hand over the blonde's cheek and Pyrrha had the urge to hurt her right now. It wasn't like she had a crush on Jaune or something. She wasn't that shallow.

Love in first sight might happen in stories but they are much rarer in reality.

It still didn't stop her from moving in between the two to stop such advances.

"Anyway. Despite how I'm lacking a partner, we should head north to where the temple ruin is according to the Headmaster. That way, we might meet someone who doesn't have a partner for me to pair up with-"

"Weeeeiss! Where did you go?"

A short young girl with a red cloak on stumbled to where they were. Everyone stared at her.

"I see you've found your partner Pyrrha" a much too seductive voice whispered next to her ear. She promptly moved to attack out of instincts and fear but ended up missing and hitting Jaune in the end.

"Ow!"

Weiss was a meanie. No, she went beyond the realm of a normal meanie and became a super meanie. She left her! The moment they made eye-contact she just turned around and left her behind. It was rude! Mean! Weren't they supposed to be partners the moment their eyes made contact?

"Weeeeiss! Where did you go?" she called out.

Perhaps it was a good thing Weiss left her. That meant that she had another chance to get a partner right? But what if there wasn't? Oh stick-fiddles, was she going to fail initiation if she didn't have a partner?

Better to have she had than to have none. Still, Weiss might have already met someone else-

Wait were there people talking nearby? Perhaps Weiss was there! Immediately Ruby ran through the bushes and found herself being

stared down by three tall people. Tall as in all of them were pretty tall. Like Jaune.

"I see you've found your partner Pyrrha" the woman in an awesomely coloured red dress said. For some reason, Ruby had a feeling that she was amused.

Looking at the woman in armour, the young Huntress did what she did best. Inspect the glorious piece of machinery that was in her hands. Although it clearly wasn't as awesome as her Crescent Rose, it was still a beautiful piece of machinery.

Then she swiped her weapon at the other woman who dodged... and accidentally hit Jaune.

"Ow!" Jaune whined as his hand slapped her cheek to stop the bleeding... wait bleeding?

"Jaune!" the armoured woman shouted in worry before inspecting Jaune for injuries... which she caused.

The other woman in red clicked her tongue before moving over to Jaune as well. When did Jaune get this popular? This looked like a scene when Yang fell down and many guys went out of their ways to try and help her.

"Umm... guys? Jaune? Girls?" she called out.

The woman in red seemed to have noticed her first before poking the armoured woman saying, "Please talk to your new partner Pyrrha. I'll take of Jaune for now."

Said armoured woman, Pyrrha turned to glare at the other woman, "Why don't you do that? I'm more worried because Jaune doesn't have his Aura unlocked. I could've killed him!"

"Wait, aura what now?"

Both women looked at Jaune before both started to explain at the same time.

"Aura is the power that-" "It is the inner energy-"

They went back to glaring at each other again. Well, Pyrrha, her new partner did anyway. Seeing that Weiss wasn't here, she might as well join with these people. At least Jaune was here. He was a funny guy and her first friend at Beacon.

"Hello? I'm here? Please don't ignore me?" she started jumping because jumping might get their attention. How else was she going to sort out what was going on?

"Ruby?!" for someone who had gotten into Beacon, Jaune had a pretty bad attention span... or a bad memory... or was a bit slow. She wasn't sure which but she wasn't going to mention it. Saying things like that was just rude.

"Hey Jaune" she said tiredly.

"Hey" he replied before looking to Pyrrha, "Huh. So you're going to be Pyrrha's partner."

"Pretty much" she nodded, "I found Weiss first but she disappeared on me so..."

"You mean the Schnee Heir? I heard rumours of how she treats others and most of them aren't good. I believe she's one of the targets of the White Fang as well" the woman in red commented, "Good thing you ended up partner with Pyrrha here. You must have gotten involved with... unsavoury things if you ended up with the other girl."

"Weiss is involved with the White Fang? I don't think Weiss is that kind of person even if she's a bit mean Cinder" Jaune's face scrounged up in confusion.

The woman in red, Cinder, seemed be fine with that answer and didn't say anything else. Ruby agreed with Jaune that Weiss wasn't the kind of bad person to be involved with a terrorist group like the White Fang even as someone of their ire but she disagreed that Weiss was only a bit mean.

"Jaune please close your eyes. I'm going to awaken your Aura" said Pyrrha suddenly.

The blonde looked surprised before agreeing, "Eh. Okay. This isn't going to hurt right? And what is this Aura?"

Oh! That was something she could answer easily.

"Aura is the power that all Hunters have. It lets us be stronger, faster and more durable among other effects" Ruby answered.

"Yes and without it, you are much at risk in this forest Jaune. I don't know why you haven't unlocked it yet but better now than never" sighed Pyrrha before she touched his shoulder.

Red Aura spilled from Pyrrha's body as it surrounded Jaune's body. She could see her Aura move into his body to beckon his Aura out.

"For it is in passing that we achieve immortality. Through this, we become a paragon of virtue and glory to rise above all. Infinite in distance and unbound by death, I release your soul, and by my shoulder, protect thee."

The moment she finished those words, white Aura started spilling out from Jaune's body before disappearing back inside it. Now... it would take training for him to draw out the full effects of Aura again but its passive effects would stay with him for the rest of his life.

"You have quite a bit of Aura" Cinder mused with interest. Ruby agreed with that settlement. According to her dad, she showed off only a fraction of the amount of light Jaune's awaken did.

"Anyway, now that Jaune is more or less safe-" said Ruby. She saw that the cut on his cheek was already healing rapidly. "We should introduce ourselves... well at least to me. It looks like you know each other and I only know Jaune."

Cinder's eyes flickered to the only male for a moment, "My... knowing so many women-"

Ruby for some reason had an urge to huff her chest out.

"Should I be concern on what you might be doing to me later?" she asked teasingly. Ruby had no idea what she just meant and from the looks of things and it looked like Jaune didn't as well.

How come Pyrrha was red?

"Well little one. I'm called Cinder Fall and I am the current partner of Jaune here."

"Nice to meet you!" Ruby nodded excitedly. Was this a new friend?

A moment later Pyrrha coughed before approaching her reaching out with a hand, "Hello. My name is Pyrrha Nikos. From the sounds of things, neither of us got the partners we wanted. Still, may we be good partners."

Ruby smiled back at her.

"Nice to meet you Pyrrha. I'm Ruby Rose and your new partner. Let's kick ass! Oh and protect Jaune. He doesn't seem that strong."

"Hey!" a voice protested.

Pyrrha only chuckled to that while Cinder cracked a smile.

Things seemed to be looking up for her. She might not have Yang or Weiss as her partner but she was with people that seemed nice if a bit strange. Now all they had to do was get through initiation.

A/M: Well things suddenly went from humour to serious business... yeah this is completely my fault. Like I said at the end of the first chapter, I am not used to writing humour. In fact, years of writing 'serious' fanfics conditioned me to automatically turn everything I write more serious and somewhat dark in some portions.

Take Ozpin, I somehow turned him from being a well-meaning Headmaster to someone who would accept those who have not the skills to pass initiation to boost numbers while knowing most of them will die. The lighter part of RWBY gives no reason of this as everything is a happy comedy adventure series. The darker side says that people actually died in initiation because they really do need the numbers to combat the Grimm so standards are... lax a bit.

On a side note, I took some liberties with Weiss. She isn't exactly my favorite character. If things went as normal, she would've met Jaune, Cinder and Pyrrha before trying to immediately partner up with Pyrrha. Then Ruby appears being Weiss partner. Pyrrha's impression of Weiss will decrease even more while she is left partnerless.

Yeah, didn't like that scenario so I changed it so Weiss didn't meet co but Ruby did being abandoned by her (which actually did happen. Weiss was a bitch until the end of Vol 1) meaning Pyrrha was willing to partner up with someone who didn't manage to get who she wanted as a partner as well.

If enough people complain, I'll change the tag from 'Humour' to 'Adventure' or something. Seriously, there may be one or two scenes I find funny but things really do get serious out of nowhere and I can't figure out how to change it to seem humorous at all.

Chapter 4

Disclaimer: I own nothing of RWBY which belongs to Rooster Teeth and the late Monty Owm.

Chapter 4: Where Jaune fails at Walking

"So Mr Arc and Miss Fall partnered up and Miss Nikos ended up partnering with Miss Rose" Ozpin looked at the group curiously.

If anything, he had suspected it would be Miss Nikos that would end up with Mr Arc. Well, these things happen and it may be for the better in the end. Miss Rose needed someone to support her and Miss Nikos filled that role quite well. And Miss Fall can easily help raise Mr Arc seeing her temperament.

"I suppose you don't have any problems with the latter partnership? The rules did state that the first person you make eye-contact with would be partners" he inquired.

Glynda glanced at the Headmaster before shaking her head, "Miss Schnee left Miss Rose behind. Even if she remained to be partnerless in the end, it can be only her fault for leaving behind a possible partner. I'm more worried about how those children will interact considering their motives."

"Yes" he took a sip, "Both Miss Fall and Miss Nikos wished for Mr Arc to be their partner with the former narrowly gaining him as one. Miss Rose was abandoned by her initial partner only to end up with Miss Nikos who seemed to have other priorities for now."

"And Mr Arc is stuck in all that. He is *clearly* not skilled enough for this level of training but perhaps being paired up with three much more component people will allow him motive to push ahead in his studies" she said.

Ozpin had an amused look on his face, "It's almost as if you were approving of allowing such people in Beacon."

She shot a glare at him but didn't say anything else. So far, most of the students that managed to stay alive partnered up with only a few left unpaired. He doubted that any of those who were alone would end up succeeding in the initiation in the end. In fact, you only needed to do three things to pass initiation and get into Beacon.

Get a partner, get a relic and return with said relic to the cliffs.

Any that lack a partner would fail no matter skilled and even if they carried a relic with them. Beacon was not for those who fought alone and he feared that Miss Schnee failed based on believing there were better partners than Miss Rose.

"A shame really. She could've had Miss Nikos as a partner if fate and luck was on her side" he took another sip from his coffee.

"Oh my. Miss Schnee was caught up by a Giant Nevermore."

Looking at the screen on replay, Miss Schnee was indeed caught up by a Giant Nevermore.

"I'll make a note to tell Peter that his theory that Nevermores are attracted to shiner people might have some ground."

Glynda could only sigh to that.

It took a good minute for everyone to agree to which directly they should head to collect the relics they needed, namely north. As much as Cinder was amused of how the Minstrel's Champion seemed to dislike her, it was just *idiotic* if they managed to fail initiation because they were too occupied taunting each other.

Not that the red-head managed to get a proper reaction out of her of course. She was too good for that.

"Is that a cave?" asked Jaune while approaching the dark tunnel that went deep into the wall and possibly underground.

"Yes, it is" she agreed.

That or it was a very deep tunnel someone decided to dig out for some reason. Knowing Remnant, it might just be both to screw with your mind. Kingdoms had risen and fallen so many times that there could be dozens of ruins lapped over each other in a single location. Often such places had multiple uses which only made it harder to categorise them.

While the entrance wasn't that large it was quite apparent that it existed considering the ancient cave writings off on the side. She doubted there was anything that may even harm her in this forest but from the looks of things, there was a Death Stalker in there... or it was shelter from one.

"Do you think that the relic might be in there?" asked Ruby.

"It *has* been quite a distance north. It might be the entrance to the ruins that the Headmaster talked about" said Pyrrha.

Cinder doubted that but she decided not to express her opinion on that. It was much more amusing for her to watch the children fondle around without a clue. After that, she could sweep in and clear the problem, gaining more of their trust.

Jaune took a branch off the ground before pulling out a cloth and was that oil?

"I'm going to make a torch" he said before tying the cloth and dipping it slightly into the oil. A moment later, there was a spark and a flame appeared on the branch he was holding. Waving it slightly, her partner peered into the cave but it was deep enough that darkness ran through it completely.

All of them took a minute when she decided to speak up.

"I was going to say we should vote on where to go in or not but it seems like a waste of resources if we don't at this point" she said making eyes at Jaune. He blushed and muttered something under his breath.

"I vote we go in the cave!" Ruby expressed her support of Jaune's idea while Pyrrha seemed prone to be lead around by her partner well enough.

"I agree. We should still search just in case the relic is in there" Pyrrha added her opinion.

For someone who incompetent, the blonde was surprisingly good at gathering more competent people around him that is in fact useful for her cause. A famed champion and a young prodigy, such people would be immensely important if she could recruit them... though she doubted she could be able to judging by their character.

But they would follow *Jaune* it seemed.

This was good. Jaune was going to be pudding in her hands sooner or later and with him in her hands, she would at some small level also have control over the other two girls that trusts him. And with the team under her control, even if they didn't know it, her plans would go through much more smoothly.

Looking at the three people, people she *could* make into a full team, Cinder faked a sigh and said, "I suppose I have no choice."

She looked at the torch burning in her partner's hand before pulling out a bit of red dust, "But I would insist that we have more than one light source. Flames are quite easily put out and I don't believe our chances to survive against Grimm in complete darkness."

The dust sparked and a flame that she knew would sustain itself for a few minutes or even an hour if she extended it enough with the amount of dust she used.

"Do you two have any tools that would serve as light sources?" she turned to the two partners who shook their heads.

"In that case, Jaune can lead while I'll bring up the back. I'm not exactly a close-range fighter" she lied.

"I can go in front of you and Pyrrha can go next to Jaune then" said Ruby. "Crescent Rose can serve as a good sniping tool but in that cave... not exactly good as a melee weapon."

Turning to Pyrrha, she supplied her own words, "I can really be at any placement. With a shield I can lead and my weapon can alternatively turn into a rifle form for support."

She smiled looking at Ruby's weapon, "But I have a feeling that my weapon doesn't have the highest fire-power out of everyone here."

The shortest Huntress giggle before an annoyed Jaune said, "Are we going in or what?"

"Of course" she made sure to brush Jaune's shoulder before moving in formation being the furthest away from her partner. Still, in her position and how she knew Ozpin set up his surveillance, she had a prime chance to eliminate anyone with her as she pleased.

And *that* satisfied her even if she wasn't going to kill any of them. Even the Headmaster wasn't *that* stupid to not notice if one person came out when four went in and who to suspect for that.

However, she was going to enjoy gauging their reaction to a possible Death Stalker attack. It appeared that none of them took notice to the ancient draws and what that could mean to the cave.

A few minutes on...

"I'm not sure this is it" said Pyrrha eventually. Cinder certainly agreed but she wanted to see the extent of her partner's stubbornness. Not

to mention this was a good chance to measure how much she needed to push to get him to do something.

And because she was *certain* that she was going to clear initiation either way.

Jaune sighed and stopped, "Pyrrha. I made the torch. Can you at least humour me for at least five more feet?"

"Well five more feet and you would be tripping into a puddle" Ruby pointed out.

The only male let out a shriek before jumping back. Oddly enough, his scream had the highest pitch among all of them. She guessed the irony that some stories she had read in the pass had some basis in reality after all.

"Oh wow. I would've tripped in a puddle... Ruby I wouldn't have tripped into a puddle right?" he turned to her.

Nervously gripping her skirt, Cinder could tell that Ruby was going to tell a lie, "Of course not! The puddle isn't that deep and pretty apparent if you're looking closely enough to the ground."

Seemingly fine with that answer, Jaune took a step around the puddle in the cave-

"AH!"

-And immediately tripped into a *second* puddle with the torch cleanly falling into water.

"Lights out" she whispered amused. For dramatic effect, she turned off her dust powered flame. While she had *abundant* amount of dust thanks to her plans, wasting some now felt like a waste even when it wasn't.

That or she wanted to know how they would react. She was a bitch. Yes, she was.

"Cinder?!" Pyrrha's panicked voice rang out.

"What happened to the light?" asked Jaune, confusion in his tone.

Taking out another piece of red dust, she lit it up showing the dim bodies of everyone else while alighting her the most, "The dust ran out and I needed to take another one out" she explained.

"Oh" Jaune got up but slipped and tripped over again. "Ow."

"Jaune... can you *not* go tripping over and into puddles? I was scared when all the lights went out" Ruby shot Cinder a dirty look. Reading into it, it was more of mock glare than anything else.

"Sorry, sorry. Didn't expect there to be a second puddle right after the first" he replied.

The girl in the cloak shouted back, "But you were the one with the torch! The now very wet torch..."

Cinder looked at the pair with interest. It seemed that those two were surprisingly close despite how little time they had to familiarise with each other. However, one certain champion was strangely enough excluded from the conversation.

"Pyrrha?" she turned over to see the red-head frowning looking to the side of the wall.

"Do you feel that?" she asked rubbing the wall with her fingers.

Jaune decided to answer with, "Soul-crushing regret?"

She had a feeling that he wasn't exactly thinking when he answered that. Although it seemed that Pyrrha wasn't paying that much attention to Jaune at the moment. Good. The girl at least knew when to reign in any possessiveness she started developing.

"No... it's warm."

Activating her ability to sense heat in more detail, Cinder *did* feel that a certain part of the cave was warmer than normal. There were a number of things that could cause that but the number one on her list considering the cave was the Death Stalker stringer.

She still didn't tell them.

But she couldn't have anyway as Jaune moved forward without giving her a chance to explain and found... a glowing stringer and connected to it... a rather *ancient* Death Stalker.

Moving before she could think, Cinder pulled out several more pieces of fire dust and lit them up, *shaping* them into fire lances before firing half a dozen off at the Grimm that was just reacting to her partner.

However her attack, low-powered it was compared to her usual attack, *bounced* off the shell of the Death Stalker.

"An ancient grimm indeed" she muttered, slightly impressed.

It was then that the Grimm moved to attack its first target... being Jaune who was the closest to it.

"AAAAA AAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH! "

Pyrrha pulled Jaune's back narrowly allow her rather useless partner to survive while Ruby opened fire using her weapon which was also ineffective against it. After a few shots, she seemed to realise this as well before calling out, "We have to run!"

"Pyrrha! Grab Jaune and get out of here" she commanded, "I'll try to stall it until we're in the clear."

Several more fire lances appeared as she waved her hand and the two Hunters ran pass her just in time for her to launch them all not at the Grimm but rather the wall and ceiling around it. If she couldn't kill

it, else risk a total cave-in then she could cause a minor one centralised on the enemy.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

"Let us get out of here" Cinder grabbed onto the hood of Ruby and started pulling her along with haste.

Not a second after, several rocks separated from the ceiling and fell where they were just at. Clicking her tongue on how close she was on being *too* overconfident in her abilities to get through this easily, she ran with Ruby while watching ahead as Pyrrha carried Jaune on her shoulder into the light.

They made it out of the cave.

"What... *was that?* " Jaune all but shouted as he was let down by the red-head.

"A Death Stalker" she simply answered.

Ruby decided to describe it better for his sake. Gestures were included. "You know. Giant scorpion-thing that you just saw. Giant pincher and the glowing stringer that you almost reached for-"

" Yes " he stressed that word, "I noticed. I mean what the hell is a Grimm like that doing in that cave?! Those flame things and even your bullets *bounced* off its shell!"

"Well-" Ruby looked uncomfortable. She was rubbing her weapon as if to encourage it for its recent failure to slay an enemy.

Cinder took over the explanation at that moment, "Grimm often gets stronger the older they get. They start growing more armour and are generally get larger as well. The armour the Death Stalker had was quite dull and easily deflected our attacks meaning it is quite old."

Thinking it over she added with a head nudge, "It might have been in there for *centuries* if the wall paintings are correct. I believe the

paintings were a *warning* to keep out rather than a place for safety. A mistake we made I believe."

"And why didn't you tell us this?" Pyrrha turned on her.

Cinder backed off with hand raised looking innocent, "Like I said, it might have been a place of safety. That and Jaune had already made a torch and you along with Ruby voted to go in. I was under the impression you *all* wanted to go in to seek the Death Stalker."

"Ah."

"Whoops."

"... Sorry for ignoring your opinion" Jaune bowed his head.

"Don't worry about it" she smiled. "We're all fine-"

The entrance and wall surrounding the cave exploded. The Death Stalker roared out in anger before snipping its pinchers out threateningly.

Jaune managed to draw out his shield this time as she drew out some dust to project into a bow and some arrows at hand. It was a *very* useful skill to have, to use her semblance to turn common dust into something *more* than even some of the most skilled dust specialists.

"Should we fight or run?" she asked Jaune.

Surprisingly and impressively enough he answered her clearly, "We fight. We can use the trees for cover."

Ruby started firing while Pyrrha changed her weapon into what seemed like a rifle form before doing the same. She nor Jaune started to act yet. She wanted to see what he would do.

... And it was better for her cover if the achievements of the team can be accounted for by someone else. The less limelight she got,

the better in this case.

"Your orders?"

"Pyrrha and I will take the vanguard. You and Ruby will cover us and try to get a finish blow. Dust is really powerful right?" he ran forward without letting her answer. A chuckle slipped through her lips.

He was a really amusing person.

The red-head switched her weapon's form again and started to support her partner. Despite his bravo, it was clear that he was not the most skilled person and there were mistakes everywhere in his stance, how he moved and even how he attacked and defended. If not for Ruby distracting the Death Stalker and Pyrrha making sure to cover him close by, he likely would've have died already.

"Still, I can't be standing here doing nothing" a smirk appeared naturally as she drew her bow and stringed up three arrows at once. Fire dust combined with the arrows as she let them loose.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

The attacks hit the armour of the Grimm but like the other attacks, managed to bounce off with ease. However she noticed that there were *dents* in the armour.

'Good to know that this Grimm isn't ancient enough to make my attack seem like nothing' she thought before using some dust to summon several more arrows before firing at one of the pincher that was heading towards Jaune's side.

While Ruby's attacks were distractions at best and Pyrrha was more often too occupied with keeping her partner alive, Jaune was doing surprising amount of damage. Was it due to his Aura, sword or him targeting a weak point?

Looking at it closer, it looked like he was targeting mostly the area in between joints and its eyes. A clever tactic but one that was difficult at best for someone without much skill like him. It was good to know he had at least have a good head on his body.

Shame if it would be chopped off.

....No she was *not* threatening to chop it off.

Cinder summoned another pair of three arrows before moving to aim at the joints like what Jaune was doing. After the first hit, Ruby took key and started firing at it as well. It was then that the Death Stalker knocked the two vanguards back with a wipe and started trying to impale them with its stringer.

"I believe removing the stringer is crucial for our partners' survival" she looked at the younger girl who had a look of determination.

"Cover me" was all she said before she disappeared in a blur.

'Fast ' she noted before her body reacted and started firing at the Grimm's eyes to cover Ruby's charge. The next moment, the weapon the younger girl was holding turned into a mechanic scythe and she *slung* herself to the Death Stalker before the blade slit through the part connected to the stringer with ease.

Ruby landed on the wall with her legs.

The Death Stalker screamed in pain.

Cinder took this chance to flick open a vial of yellow lightning dust and started channelling her Aura through it, turning the dust into thunder and *lightning* .

"Take cover!" she called out as everyone saw what she was doing and leaped away.

BOOOOOOM!

The next moment was a flash... and a cater where the dead Grimm lied dissolving appeared next to the entrance of the cave.

Knowing that such use of dust was extremely exhausting for the common person (she was *not* a common person and therefore wasn't tired), she faked being out of breathe slightly. She couldn't make sure for being too tired for too long but appearing out of breathe was better than being perfectly fine after that level of attack.

The power of the Fall Maiden helped and she didn't want Ozpin to even suspect she had the power in her. She could tell that the other half of the power was in Beacon and she *would* get it eventually.

"Well... that's a thing" Ruby commented seeing the dead Grimm.

Being *clearly* out of breath, Jaune huffed in a couple breaths before saying, "I didn't know dust was *that* powerful. I mean, everyone used it at home and yet..."

"That" Cinder decided to point out, "Was the effect of some high-quality dust under the direct use of a practised dust user. The stuff everyone can get commercially are at best the low-quality batch which can *barely* be used in battle."

"And well" she waved her hand, "You can see why the Kingdoms want this resources a lot and why the Kingdoms managed to survive till now. Dust runs the world and those who can use Dust have an enormous power to use against Grimm."

No one said a word against the power of dust. Instead the conversation moved to praising Jaune on his tactics and initiative on targeting the weak points of the Death Stalker before anyone else.

"You were *really* good Jaune!" said Ruby, being the first to encourage the blonde.

"Really?"

"Well- *pretty* good at least. You were running around while we made sure you didn't die after all" she added. Cinder could tell that her partner's ego took a hit. Not that ego would matter a lot considering his future position under her.

But even Cinder had to praise him a *bit* .

"You did well Jaune. Targeting the weak-points is basic and valid strategy against any foe" Cinder nodded. She was unused to fighting Grimm as often as other Hunters so she had made little note of their weak-points other than where best to *burn* them.

She was truly unused to dealing with people who needed to use such tactics on her side. Emerald had her illusions and Mercury was scummy enough to chain-target weak points on his own via brute force.

"I-I did?" he looked confused. Her eyes widened only slightly knowing that Jaune actually didn't in fact *think* . This was either some natural talent or he was just that lucky.

Pyrrha nodded to his words and added her own praise, "I was impressed. I didn't think that you would be already able to use Aura to block an attack like that even if it was a bit overpowered."

She recalled when that happened and remembered that *was* a point when Jaune looked like he was going to but hit but didn't when he blocked with his shield. Did he use Aura then? Or was this false praise?

"Well you know what they say about those with large Aura" she waggled her eyebrows at Pyrrha.

She blushed immediately understanding what she meant. Ruby looked confused but what was most interesting was that Jaune paled to her comment.

Interesting...

It was very soon that the gang managed to find a clearing and some ruins that *had* to be the best that the Headmaster said. There, she could already see four people there including *Yang* . She rushed in there without a second thought, glad that her sister was fine.

"Ruby!" she called out reaching for a hug.

"Yang!" she shouted doing the same.

" *NO-RA ~!*"

She slammed into something pink... and ginger... and something soft.

"H-Huh?" she spattered out seeing where she had landed her face into. Looking up, she saw the amused eyes of someone that was grinned at her. Immediately blushing, Ruby used her semblance to get out of the grip of this strange girl before hiding behind Yang.

Yang laughed, "Didn't think you would cower now little sis."

"I was s-surprised okay!" she stuttered pulling her hood down on her face. Oh god, what if they thought she was weird or a *freak* or something.

Then off to the distance she thought she heard Jaune.

"Ruby! Why did you run off like that?"

Actually it was Jaune and she had just run off from them the moment she saw her sister. Oh... Cinder was giving her the *look* and Pyrrha didn't look that impressed though it changed to a smile a moment later.

She didn't want to disappoint her partner just like she didn't want to disappoint Yang or even Jaune at this point.

"Sorry. I saw Yang so I just..." she rubbed the back of her head in embarrassment. Looking over, she saw that Blake was here as well!

"Hey Blake!" she waved.

Blinking as if in surprise the black-haired girl replied, "Hello Ruby."

Huh. Did she do something bad? She would've thought people would've been more excited to see each other again especially in a death-driven forest filled with Grimm.

"Hi!" the previous girl appeared again shocking Ruby. She seemed... very excitable. A bit too excited like when she was on a sugar rush.

"I'm Nora" *Nora* continued to say before pulling a guy by the arm, "And this is Ren!"

"Hello" he said bowing. Ruby replied to him before looking around. Jaune and Cinder seemed to be returning from the ruins and handed Pyrrha something. She immediately moved to where her partner was.

"What did you get?"

Pyrrha showed her a golden queen chess piece smiling slightly, "A relic I believe. From what Cinder believes, those with matching pairs get sorted into a team. She and Jaune also took the golden queen piece."

Oh... she was hoping that she could be in the same team as Yang but-

"Did you perhaps want to be on the same team as your sister?"

Ruby struggled for an answer, "Well-I... I mean. I'm actually *fine* being without Yang you know. But I kind of want to be with my sister as well?"

It was at that moment Yang slugged her arm around her shoulder, "What is this about choosing which team you're going to?"

"The pieces symbolises who we get teamed up with. Cinder and Jaune has a golden queen piece like this one" explained Pyrrha. "I was asking Ruby if she wanted to partner up with you instead of them."

Yang frowned. That was rare.

"Actually I think it would be good if Ruby didn't follow me around all the time. I mean, I *care* for Ruby but sometimes I think she needs to spread her wings. I told her when we got to Beacon that she needed friend and the next moment I saw her again, Jaune was her friend" she said causing Ruby to meekly blush.

"And during our flights I was worried about her so I decided to partner up with her to protect her but I'm pretty sure you're strong enough for the task."

"Of course, she is my partner" Pyrrha stared at Yang. "I would protect her... and we would protect Jaune as well."

"What was that?" Yang looked confused.

"Well, Jaune is really nice but he's a bit... weak. And Cinder seems to have her hands full if she needs to protect Jaune as a dust user. So... me and Pyrrha decided to help protect Jaune as well" explained Ruby.

Her sister took a moment to stare at him and then stare at Jaune and back at them. Then she laughed.

"Ha... hahahahaaaHAHAHAAA" she held her stomach as the last laugh was reduced to giggles. Yang then patted her head with a wispy look.

"Not even three days into Beacon and you're already protecting people. Do me proud sis and make sure blondy over there doesn't die. It not often that I let people who cut my *glorious* hair live" she grinned.

" *Yaaaaannng* " Ruby whined. She always tried to embarrass-

" *aaaaaaaaaaaaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHH!*"

Everyone looked around for the source of the scream. Eventually it was Yang who spotted where it came from.

"Is that... a giant *Nevermore* ?" Yang asked.

Ruby peered upwards to get a closer look and saw the white figure of a certain girl that should've been her partner but wasn't.

" *Is that Weiss?* " she shouted in surprise. Whelp. It looked like they had a rescue mission to do now. Weiss was mean but not mean enough to abandon to Grimm.

A/N:Bit later than usually in my posting. Had stuff to do.

Let's talk about Cinder or rather her semblance. By all accounts it has something to do with fire/glass in some way considering I cannot see making weapons out of nowhere being a skill that any dust user than replicate. I could play it off as Cinder being extremely skilled in using 'fire' to create weapons like that or her semblance being one to create weapons like that.

Either way, she is going to let people make presumptions because what better to hide the true nature of her semblance than give them a reason to believe its something else?

Anyway there isn't much else to talk about aside from how BS strong Cinder is as a Dust user. Remember how she managed to match Glynda in that area? Yeah I don't see any ordinary

Grimm being able to survive that much power. Plus Cinder has a stash (or several) of high-quality dust that she had 'liberated' from many places.

Also, I planned on finishing writing this series by the weekend... ends up reediting chapters over and over again while neglecting the last two chapters...

Chapter 5

Disclaimer: I own nothing of RWBY which belongs to Rooster Teeth and the late Monty Owm.

Chapter 5: Where Jaune is made Leader to a Team of Powerful Women

"Someone help me! "

The one called Weiss Schnee, the same girl that chatted her up in the possibly to being in the same team was in the air, in danger and at risk by the claws of the largest Nevermore she had ever seen. Pyrrha didn't know what to think about it.

Was she supposed to be glad this happened to her? Or was she supposed to feel as shocked and scared for her as Jaune and Ruby were. Cinder looked as if she didn't care and only matched the others' expression after a moment. And Pyrrha was certain she saw *irritation* towards Weiss from the woman.

Another thing that seemed to make her distrusts the woman. There were just many things that seemed... *fake* when it came to Cinder and she wasn't sure what. But now was not the time to bring up any thoughts that would interfere with their team-work.

Pyrrha certainly didn't have the greatest relationship with the Schnee but she was obligated to help people as much as possible and this was one of those times.

"Any ideas on what we should do?" she asked everyone. She knew she wasn't the type to make plans. It was more because she was too used to following orders so she feared that any plan that came out of her would be bad.

"We need to shoot down the Nevermore" Ruby shouted her idea out to everyone. Already her weapon sprung out and she aimed-

"But what about Weiss?" Jaune rejected that idea by holding down her weapon to prevent her from firing, "She could get hurt if we miss and hit her..."

"But how would she get down if the Nevermore doesn't. We might as well shoot to save time on a plan that might not work" Blake questioned. From the looks of things, that girl had the worst opinion of Weiss.

Shaking her head Cinder added her own suggestions, "We can't take away the chance we can save her. We shoot the Nevermore down *and* catch the girl if we can. She's dead if we don't aid her now anyway."

"Can someone help? Any day now would be fine!"

Ah, it seemed that Weiss's patience had run out.

"Jaune? Your plan?" she asked.

If there was anyone that was decent at making plans, it would be Jaune. Therefore she would do what he would ask. She believed that he would make up a plan that had the highest chance of saving Weiss.

Clicking his tongue Jaune shouted out, "Fine! Cinder! Snipe down the Nevermore by its wings. Ruby and Pyrrha will try to shoot it to make it drop Weiss when it passes over us. Everyone else can with a decent long-ranged weapon can help but otherwise, help me catch Weiss *when* she falls."

The moment the blonde ordered that, Pyrrha had switched her weapon into its rifle form and started to take aim. The Giant Nevermore was quite a distance away from them which meant that any normal ranged weapon could be less than stellar in accuracy.

Seemingly *countless* lances rain towards the Nevermore and pierced through its wings. Black feathers rained down as more and more of its wings were torn apart. Pyrrha almost felt pity towards it if not for the level of *fear* she had of someone having that much firepower

Cinder Fall was certainly a person to watch.

After the de-winged Nevermore was killed by the combination of sheer attacks from everyone else, what was left was to leave the forest and head back to the cliff with relics on hand. Ruby found her time in initiation pretty good not only because of how much she managed to show off but also because she made so many new friends!

Nora seemed like a decent person and Ren seemed cool enough. And while Blake was still a stranger to her, she bet with time she would manage to get her to open up to her. Of course, that doesn't discount Jaune, Pyrrha and Cinder as well. She wouldn't want to neglect her own team.

... Even though Yang telling her to be on separate teams stung a bit.

Still, they pretty much all almost completed initiation.

All except... Weiss.

" *YOU!* " speak of the devil and they appear.

"Why are you partnered up with Pyrrha Nikos?!" she screamed. Backing off a couple of steps, it didn't help since Weiss was moving forward, looking as if she was going to attack at any moment.

"Oi. Back off princess" said Yang. Her arm moved to push Weiss away and she could tell that she was barely holding back on attacking as well.

Glaring her sister asked, "What do you have against my sis? It's not her fault that she ended up partnered with someone *you* want."

" *Because I was supposed to be partners with the dolt!* And yet when I look now, she seemed to have moved on to become another person's partner. You are breaking the rules here" Weiss snarled.

It was at that moment that Pyrrha appeared with Jaune and Cinder in tow. Well it would be pretty natural to gather and help out teammates.

"What is going on here?" asked Pyrrha. Her frown was more apparent than ever.

"I believe the... *princess* here is making a fuss on who is whose partner. I believe Ruby had mentioned she and Weiss were partners first?" said Cinder.

"Yes!" the white-haired girl seemed to latch over that, "Ruby and I were-"

"But that ended when Weiss here *left Ruby behind* for better pastures. A shame really. Ruby is quite talented and she would do well as Pyrrha's partner" Cinder continued to say. At the same time, it felt like everyone stopped breathing for a moment when Cinder said 'left Ruby behind'.

"You..." Yang growled. Her eyes turned red as she stalked closer to-

"Yang *stop* !" she cried grabbing her sister's arm. She couldn't pick a fight now. Not now when they were still in initiation. She could fail because of that! Ruby didn't want to leave her behind no matter the reason.

"Rubes, why are you stopping me from punching this *bitch* ?!"

" *Because she doesn't matter right now!* " she took a breath in, "We got the relics. We should just leave. Weiss might get a relic but she

doesn't have a partner. Without one she *can't* pass so... she doesn't matter."

"It does matter because she *abandoned* you the moment she could!"

"But I met Pyrrha after that!"

"It doesn't matter. That should not have happened at all. The fact that she can so easily *abandon* someone says a lot on how much we can actually trust her" she growled.

What she said seemed to have shocked Weiss but before she could add another comment Cinder spoke up.

"Yang's right. It's better to not to waste time with Miss Schnee right now. *She* would have to find a partner on her own. Besides, we don't have any spare numbers for her to partner up with either way" she said.

Ruby looked down feeling depressed. Was it this easy for someone to be isolated and blamed?

"Cheer up Ruby" Jaune patted her shoulder, "You still have the rest of us even if you can't befriend Weiss."

"And we will always make sure to stay by your side no matter what" added Pyrrha. Hearing both of them support her like that... they were *really* good friends weren't they?

"Not to pry into some emotional bonding" Cinder spoke up, "But it seems that there are some Ursas heading our way. We should take care of them at least before leaving. Don't want the others that come after us be in danger right?"

Ursa? Grimm?

"Huh there's... really a couple coming this way" she was surprised that Cinder could spot them that far away. It wouldn't do if they were

allowed to live. It was their job as Hunters to take care of the Grimm problem no matter how many appeared.

"Actually can all of you do me a favour and *not* interfere?" asked Pyrrha moving first in front. "First the Death Stalker and now the Nevermore... I wish to test myself to see if I am not rusty on killing Grimm."

"Pyrrha?" Jaune questioned.

Ruby was as stunned as he would be because Pyrrha wanted to fight a horde of Ursas *alone*. Sure, *she* could do it and she was certain that Yang could as well but it was still dangerous to fight alone!

"Please let me do this" she stated. Ruby could tell that she was determined from how her eyes seemed to shine at the number of enemies coming at them. "I will not let a single one pass."

"Why do you want to do this? Isn't it better for everyone to cooperate to fight?" he asked.

She paused as the Ursas got closer and closer before answering, "Because I have something to prove."

The next moment, she was charging in alone and Ruby moved to at least back her up. A hand grabbing her arm stopped her.

"Why are you stopping me Cinder?!" she cried out. The black-haired woman had a grim look and yet did not explain.

After seeing no one else moving to help her partner, Ruby asked them, "Aren't you all going to help?"

No one moved.

"It's because this is something that is important to Pyrrha" Cinder spoke up. "And everyone else knows it."

"Wha-?" she looked at her confused. What would be that important to risk their life like that? This wasn't just being brave or courageous but rather recklessness!

"Pyrrha Nikos... how to explain her" Jaune's partner muttered. "She is the top graduate from Sanctum which is place where it is common to kick others down to increase your rankings. She is also the champion of the Minstrel Regional Tournament four years in a row. A record I believe."

"And?"

"And that level of achievement also comes with a level of fame and also a level of *pride* . Pride to be better than others. Despite what Pyrrha wishes she could be, it is in her *nature* to try and be *better* than others. To go a dozen steps further when ordinary people take one" she said looking at the red-head.

"I was the one who managed to kill the Death Stalker in the end. I was also the one who managed to cripple the Nevermore on my own as well" Cinder let go of her arm at that point. She wasn't going to help Pyrrha at the moment.

"Are we... not going to do anything to help her?"

Cinder shook her head, "If only to not step on her pride. She is quite a head-strong person when push comes to shove. Don't worry. She will calm down after this and if she doesn't... Emerald Forest has quite the number of Grimm for her to vent on."

Ruby could only chuckle to that. What was she supposed to think?

"So all the teams have been finalised. I have a great feeling that this year in particular will be exceptional" Ozpin smiled at the students all slowly making their way to the main hall. They were all nervous to what team they would be placed in and he wouldn't fail those expectations.

However there were still some that managed to fail despite living through initiation.

"There are a *few* students with high potentials that failed despite this though" Glynda commented.

She was obviously inferring to the Miss Schnee, a practised dust user, one that might rival her in the future if enough time, dedication and training. A shame really, those who used dust as a primary means of combat were rare and those who did so well were even rarer. Money was one of the requirements as dust was the most expensive component to being a dust user.

Even Glynda being from a well-off family struggled with her studies due to a lack of funds for higher-grade dust to use. It was only through the intervention of Beacon and its mighty resources that allowed her to graduate into one of the most powerful dust users in the world.

"If Miss Schnee didn't decide to leave behind Miss Rose... then things might've been different. We cannot control the actions of our student but guide them into making the right choice" he replied.

"Yes I cannot make excuses for her when she blatantly broken a core tenant of being a Hunter even if it was a momentarily thing" she sighed.

"However it may be in the future that she had learnt a valuable lesson from. Much more than if she did succeed through initiation. Mistakes tend to stand out more than countless successes after all."

As the Deputy-Headmistress scrolled through the list of people and what teams they would be, she added the comment, "I do hope the head of the SDC doesn't take offence that his daughter didn't pass the test. He's already jacking up the prices of imported Dust by a large margin thanks to the Dust Thief."

"If it comes to that, I'll talk to James about it. No matter the power of the SDC, it pales to Atlas and eventually the Four Kingdoms united. If he pushes that far..." Ozpin narrowed his eyes.

"But back to our precious new students. How do you think the lessons will impact them?" he wondered.

There were only three things a student needed to pass initiation. Find a partner, a relic and to return safely. More than often, that is the core of how a Hunter acts in the world. To fight with someone you trusted, to retrieve or protect another and to come back alive.

In the end, he was an old man teaching the young as subtly as he could.

For those who refused to work with others... well there were other ventures for them to go to for education but certainly not in Beacon. Cooperation was the key foundation that the Kingdoms stood by and if not by reinforcing that idea time and time again, he feared that war would come again.

The Black Queen had crippled and stolen part of the Fall Maiden. She would be back to obtain the rest of that power and he feared that even the Black Queen was but a pawn to a far more dangerous foe.

He idly tightened his grip on his cane.

There was so much to do, so little time and eventually all he would be able to do is to leave the burden to the children. Such is how cruel the world is.

"Cardin Winchester, Russel Thrush, Dove Bronzewing and Sky Lark" four figures approached the centre stage as the Headmaster personally went through the team formations.

As much as Jaune was happy that initiation was done and finished, he was still nervous for Beacon. The showing that everyone else did proved that he was lacking a *lot* compared to them. Especially compared to his team-mates.

Ruby was a quirky girl but had probably one of the most *vicious* weapons he had ever heard of. Not to mention she had the *speed* to back up her weapon which was only made more dangerous due to it.

Pyrrha seemed like a good person that helped him out at the beginning of initiation. She proceeded to prove her skill as she *single-handedly* destroyed a horde of powerful Grimm like she was taking a stroll. She came back without a scratch and mentioned it was a good workout.

And Cinder, his partner was probably the worst when it came to comparisons. He didn't know what she was thinking but the sheer *power* she had when she used those dust moves basically made everything he knew amount to *nothing*. Still, she seemed nice enough if a bit intimidating to go against.

Frankly all of them *scared* him in a big way. Not because they were all so strong in their own ways but rather because for some reason *they* looked up to *him* for instructions!

"The four of you retrieved the Black Bishop pieces. From this day forward you will work together as team CRDL (Cardinal). Lead by Cardin Winchester!"

He clapped politely as the new team exited the stage.

"Lie Ren, Nora Valkyrie, Blake Belladonna and Yang Xiao-Long" the Headmaster spoke.

He could see Ruby already clapping and wolf-whistling as her sister went up on the stage as well as a number of other people doing the same as well. Huh. Yang was the popular type. It was strange that she was willing to talk to him.

... Though it may be because of being friends of Ruby?

"The four of you retrieved the Golden Rook pieces. From this day forward you will work together as team RNBY (Ruby). Lead by Lie Ren!"

Jaune almost spat out a choke. He certainly could see Ruby doing that and also mumbling under her breath.

" *Team Ruby... I could've been Team Ruby...* "

Off to the side, Cinder snickered before adding her own comment to the Headmaster's choice of team name, "I believe the Headmaster had pre-planned team names for possible teams. Well *Ruby* does stand for a colour after all."

"Ruby seemed to be bummed out about the name" said Pyrrha.

Jaune snorted, "Of course. *Who doesn't* want their team name to be their actual name?"

"It's a bit arrogant don't you think" Pyrrha frowned, "Not that I have anyone who names their team off themselves. And the *headmaster* is the one giving out the names based of his own deductions."

Jaune opened his mouth but at that moment the Headmaster spoke up again.

"-Jaune Arc, Cinder Fall, Ruby Rose and Pyrrha Nikos."

"We're up" Pyrrha whispered with a slight smile. He noticed that it was a bit *empty* but didn't comment on it. Cinder had the same kind of smile on her face but Ruby was looking more nervous like him.

Up on the stage... was only when Jaune knew how many eyes was on him. Or to be precise, glaring at him because of the appearances of his team-mates, it was not mistake considering how many other males there were and most of them ending up in most male-dominant teams or completely male teams like team CRNL.

"The four of you retrieved the Golden Queen pieces. From this day forward you will work together as team JCRN (Jacaranda). Lead by Jaune Arc!"

Jaune was...

He was... *stunned* . He was the leader. Not Cinder, not Pyrrha and not even Ruby who all could've been better leaders than him. He couldn't even speak to protest because he was simply too shocked of the appointment.

"I..." he muttered out before Cinder patted one shoulder while Pyrrha did the same with the other.

"Congratulations Jaune" the red-head smiled at him.

Cinder didn't speak but there seemed to be approval in her eyes? It was hard to tell what someone was thinking just from how they looked at you without them being distinct. Ruby on the other hand was jumping around and eventually hugged him.

"You'll be a good leader Jaune" she smiled up at him before she let go and went to hug Pyrrha as well.

But there was one other thing that was on his mind at the moment. Sure he probably now needed to make plans on how to deal with the team and everything else in-between but first... *what the hell was a Jacaranda ?*

Ruby had such a... *unique* way of positioning the room to make more space for all of them. Despite how reluctant Jaune was, he *did* need a study table on his own if he was to get through classes via a vicious amount of studying. He needed the knowledge more than Ruby.

Therefore while Jaune and Ruby both wanted bunk beds, *she* and Pyrrha opted to make sure their places of sleeping wasn't so

unstable. Well if the beds collapsed over each other, they would change their minds then.

And speaking of the girl...

"Ruby, you will need to catch up on your studies as well" she said.

" *But Cinnnder* " she childishly whined. "We *just* got here. Why are you making plans for all of us to study *now* ? We have much more important things to do. Like-like being *better* friends or showing off our weapons!"

"I believe in doing things as early as possible" she blinked before shaking her head in amusement.

"Besides I believe *I* am fine with my studies and I have no doubt Pyrrha is. You *two* I have much doubt on. Though I suppose we could wait until the teachers test us and you two get the *lowest* scores because you didn't even bother to open a book" she stated.

"But aren't we supposed to learn how to fight Grimm?" Jaune asked.

"We are" she smiled.

"How is *studying* supposed to help us?"

"A number of reasons" she continued to smile. Her mouth twitched from the fake smile. At this rate she might accidentally *beat him* because she hated nothing more than *idiotic people would couldn't appreciate knowledge* .

As if sensing his upcoming doom if he continued down his path, Jaune collapsed on his bed and stared at the underside of Ruby's bed above him.

"Fine" he sighed, "Just make sure to tell me the reasons why I need to study something when you make me. I have been through so many people who tried teaching me *just because* and no other reason."

"And you Ruby?" she turned to the younger girl.

"I still don't get I *need* to study as well. I probably have a better education than Jaune-no offend there."

"No problem."

Cinder sighed and turned to the red-head next to her and asked, "Do you wish to explain it to her or should I?"

Pyrrha seemed to look in confusion and motioned for her to speak. Hmm, it seems like the champion didn't know what was wrong with Ruby being here so early. Well, her report from Emerald *did* provide her more information than most regarding how Ruby Rose was accepted into Beacon after all.

"Ruby, you got accepted into Beacon two years early."

"Yep!" she looked proud at that fact. Even Jaune wasn't surprised at this point. It was very apparent at her height and how she acted being closer to a child than adult.

"However did you cover the materials in between the two years you skipped yet?"

Now Ruby started to look nervous before letting out a small, "No?"

"Then you have two years' worth of study to catch up. Beacon is the *advance* Academy for study to become a Hunter. While there are many other places that does train Hunters, Beacon provides a much more in depth study course covering a *much larger* variety of subjects" she explained, "Which means they are *presuming* that you know all the content that you need to learn in these more advance classes."

"For example" she glanced at Jaune, "Combat class isn't about learning *how* to fight but rather how to refine your fighting style into something that is better. It is useless for those can't fight properly."

"Cinder!" Pyrrha spoke up suddenly, "Can't they take some time to... get used to how Beacon first before you tell them all of this?"

She shrugged, "I'm just saying what will happen. If they cannot be bothered to catch up then at best they'll repeat a year. Worst is that they cause *us* to die because they are too incapable."

Jaune in particular flinched to that.

"Anyway, we should get to sleep for now. Tomorrow will be our first day at Beacon and we can work out a schedule on keeping the team at the *top* " she smiled before moving into the bathroom to get changed.

Closing the door with a click to lock it, she took out the clothes she always wore to sleep when she could. It was red, short and barely covered her legs and other private parts... and a bit transparent as well.

Ah, it seemed she forgot to get less provocative night-clothing... well Jaune can deal with avoiding looking at her until she can order some cotton ones later. And it wasn't as if she had something that the other girls didn't have.

"Cinder what are you wearing?!"

"I saw nothing. I saw nothing. I SAW NOTHING!"

"Eepp!"

"Well it seems they're having a lot of fun next door" Blake flicked through another page as Ren struggled to get Nora to calm down and sleep.

Yang on the other hand had her ear clamped to the wall and was giggling.

A/N: Let's talk about Weiss since this is literally the last time she appears in this series. Someone needed to be replaced for Cinder to appear and there was room for one Dust user in the cast. So Weiss got the boot from me. And though this seems like bashing when I tilt my head enough, it really isn't to the extent that I am actively hating her. I find her reactions quite reasonable in her shoes.

She is a) Very stressed b) Very pissed and c) Ruby looks like a good target. Basically her first experience on the initiation gets dashed quite quickly. She finds Ruby whom is literally a step higher than Jaune in her mind, which is very low. She then ditches Ruby and ends up partner-less and through a series of events, in the claws of a Giant Nevermore. This is proceeded by attacks at said Nevermore while not believing the others had spotted her and were intentionally not aiming to hit her. And after all of this, she is still partner-less and discovers Ruby ended up partnering with Pyrrha whom she wanted to partner with originally.

In other words, Ruby 'gave' her the excuse to try and rip into her all while she was emotionally stressed beyond hell.

Yeah that doesn't go well for her. In fact the whole Beacon thing didn't go well for her in her perspective.

Anyway the chapters henceforth may or may not be the best work or even funny. I know for a fact that chapter 6-9 will be dealing with more serious issues (As in its less funny) while I'll be trying to rewrite chapter 10 into something less serious. Making the series full of non-serious and funny scenes is one thing but do you all really think there *won't* be issues with *Cinder* being in a team?

Chapter 6

Disclaimer: I own nothing of RWBY which belongs to Rooster Teeth and the late Monty Owm.

Chapter 6: Where Cinder regrets her Partner Choice

"Ruby can you explain why you got such a *low* score on your test?" Cinder glared down at the little girl. Said little girl 'epped' before running behind a certain red-head that only sighed in resignation.

"Cinder, getting a *50* isn't such a low mark. In fact she managed to pass the test. And didn't you say that Ruby needed to catch up on the two years she missed out on?" Pyrrha said while guarding her partner.

The poor girl was shivering a bit to the glare that she was unused to being shot at her. Pyrrha on the other hand was steadier and much more used to assertive people trying to intimidate her.

"That's not the point. In fact, the fact that she managed to only get this low score at the beginning which is a summary quiz that is meant to be the easiest test you get to do is worrying" Cinder retorted. "The followings tests, quizzes and exams will only get harder from here."

"If you don't improve I'll take away your cookies" she stated.

"No Cinder!"

"Yes Cinder" she rolled her eyes before making pointed looks at Pyrrha to aid her when the time came to take away the cookies. However all she got back was a wry smile and shake of a head.

Cinder scowled to that. But no matter, she had time to deal with Ruby sooner or later. There was someone else she needed to deal

with now.

She turned her eyes to a certain blonde who was *cringing* heavily.

"Speaking of *tests*, can *you* tell me why you *failed* yours Jaune?" she sweetly asked. There was no way in the deepest part of hell that Cinder was going to be 'kind' to him no matter his answer.

"I... umm... am lacking in a lot of ways?" he stuttered out. He had a feeling that telling a lie would not be good in this situation and that his partner could somehow tell if he was lying.

"Well I suspected this would happen" Cinder rubbed her forehead. What was worse than dealing with crafty people? Dealing with idiotic people. The former she knew how to deal with but with the latter, there was really only a few ways to deal with them.

Make them smarter, make them more competent and so on.

Hopefully Jaune would fare better in actual combat. He would be at *least* somewhat useable in that part of a Hunter's lifestyle right? She needed a foundation to ever train Jaune to a proper level after all.

"Don't worry! I'm better in a fight!" he tried to assure her. Considering how badly he did in his tests, she really doubted that.

Jaune moved sluggishly with the motions as he swung his sword again. Cardin blocked it with too much ease that he didn't even bother to dodge it. The leader of Team CNDL was tall, taller than even the blonde and with the brute strength to match. For the leader of Team JCRN who had awakened his Aura only recently, this level of strength was beyond him.

Not to mention he was quite unskilled in a number of other things.

"This is where you lose" Cardin arrogantly declared before pushing back Jaune without even attacking him.

In a way, Ruby pitied Jaune at the moment. Not because that he was going to lose but the resulting fallout with the team when they are behind their team walls. Cinder made it *clear* that the team was going to be good and as the team leader, Jaune had to at least live up to the team's expectations.

'She is also really scary when she wants.' She remembered that she thought she felt flames crawl up her back when Cinder 'suggested' she should do some more readings to catch up on the stuff that she missed out on.

The young Huntress did just that in *fear* of what Cinder could do to her. Her leader's partner was not only strong but *really* smart as well. How could she know what smart people could do to her?

It was like dealing with Yang when she's keeping a secret. Ruby had never been able to loosen those lips on her sister when she actually made a serious attempt in blocking information from Ruby. It was mean but she couldn't do anything to her sister.

-Just like she couldn't do anything to Cinder.

Nagging or annoying her only made the *punishment* worse. She shivered at the sheer thought, the sheer *heretic* act that Cinder was willing to drop down to. How could anyone *destroy cookies in front of her eyes* like that? They were made to be eaten not burnt to ashes like that.

'Really, what's the point of making Jaune the leader if Cinder is the one who's taking charge...' she sighed.

Still, Jaune was still new to this leadership thing and she doubted she would be better than him in that regard. Pyrrha from what little she could tell simply wasn't suited for the leader role and Cinder was *too* suited for it in a bad way. In that way, Jaune was really the best pick for leader in Team JCRN.

'Though Jaune should be more forceful to what Cinder can and cannot do. Restricting my cookie supply isn't a good thing!' she pouted just at the moment Jaune was defeated.

"Wow, blondie over there got his ass kick" Yang commented to her side.

"Well Cardin *does* have an advantage with being taller, stronger and having armour that's pretty high quality" Ruby replied. "And Jaune isn't that good at fighting yet. Cinder will probably be making sure he's up to standard by the time the first semester of the year ends."

"Ah that Cinder right?" her sister pointed at the fuming unofficial sub-leader of the team. The cloaked girl whined at the fury in her eyes. Yep, Jaune is going to get it after class. Still, it's a bit surprising that Pyrrha wasn't trying to stop Cinder from doing this.

Usually her partner and the other woman didn't get along that well compared to everyone else. Sure Cinder was only a *bit* mean but it was always for something good. Like... rewarding her cookies when she did well in tests and... removing them when she didn't.

"Students as you can see. Mr Arc's Aura has now dropped into the red. In a tournament style duel this would indicate that Jaune is no longer fit for battle and the official may call the match" the professor said.

"However while in an official duel, regulations exist to protect your lives, battles against the Grimm will not have anyone hand-holding you. The Grimm *will* take any chance to take your lives and managing your Aura may just be what keeps you alive or leave you dead."

There was silence as everyone listened.

"While class has just begun for everyone, we will make sure to cover single battles, double battles and even team battles in this class by

the end of the year" she pointed to the screen where images of different Hunters fighting each other appeared.

"What about battles against Grimm?" someone asked in the class.

"That will occur next year when we are assured that everyone can fight well enough that a Beowolf may not eat any of you up with ease" she glanced at Jaune. "Remember that you have time to get stronger and to not neglect your training. Mr Arc, Mr Winchester please return to your teams."

"I will now explain-"

Absently listening to what Professor Goodwitch was explaining about how Aura worked to prevent serious injuries and so on, Ruby flicked her eyes to the book she was reading. She more or less knew what the professor was saying from her training with Uncle Qrow.

... Though his words were a lot less formal and involved a lot more alcohol, drinking and slurs.

"Hey you okay?" she asked as her leader sat down next to her. Jaune's shoulders were slumped and she didn't blame him. That was actually a bad fight.

"No..." Jaune muttered with his head down.

Ah, he was depressed. Ruby wanted to clear him up but Uncle Qrow said that doing that would only encourage people to keep on making mistakes that they couldn't. That and Cinder was really scary when she wanted to be.

Sighing a second time, seeing Jaune not reacting well to Pyrrha trying to encourage him, Ruby got back to reading. Better to catch up now or Cinder might take away her hidden stash of cookies.

She *always* seemed to be able to find them for some reason.

Jaune Arc sucked at fighting.

That was something she had expected but nonetheless seemed to have too much expectation for the blonde to actually be competent in. Now that she thought about it, that was the conclusion she had from the beginning but it seemed to adrift away sometime during initiation.

Was he more charismatic than she thought? Nah, that couldn't be it. Her partner couldn't argue his way out of a paper bag... in a literal sense. Cinder was charismatic when she wanted to be. Jaune was simply not though did it count as charisma when it came from pity?

Still, he could lose for all she cared but did he have to lose to *that* buffoon? She had passed the cafeteria with the idiot with an armour fetish boasting that *she* couldn't be that much better if her partner was so weak. It took all she had not to burn his face off.

Fool. She would need to deal with such things in the next combat class. While she was skilled as a dust user and that was admittedly her strongest trait, she was still skilled in close-combat. It was just

She believed she was on rotation to fight next lesson with Ruby. With only so much time to a single class, Goodwitch divided teams into two of which can fight in their class.

Jaune and Pyrrha fought today so she and Ruby would fight next time.

But right now her attention was on the blonde that was looking over the many bruises he managed to let be inflicted on him. She grimaced at the sight of someone who was supposed to lead her (even in appearances only) look so *weak*. These were not proud wounds but ones to be scorned at.

"Jaune" she said coldly. "I am displeased with your performance."

The room paused when she said that. Understandable considering the weight of her words. She had managed to get Ruby to earnestly study on her own and Jaune to do the same to some degree.

"Am I supposed to be making excuses right now?" he sighed starting to rub his numerous bruises *again* .

She should get Pyrrha to help him with those later. God knows she didn't have the patience to aid him at the moment. She was more likely to just hit him and made sure to stand clear away from the blonde just in case her instincts would get the better of her.

She shook her head, "Not at all. We all know that you are not up to... *standards* when it comes to a number of things. While Ruby here only needs to catch up on her studies which can be done in a good amount of time, it appears you will be needed to be coached on *everything* ."

The blonde flinched and she didn't care.

He would get stronger if only to shine more so his shadows could cover her movements better. That and this would be the perfect time to forge Jaune into a decent lover if her cover required *that* .

"Being bad at studies isn't that bad at Beacon. While the Academy would *prefer* you would have a proper education in case Hunter life isn't for you, *combat* is different. There are no Hunters that don't fight. Being bad at fighting is much worse than being bad at studying" she spoke making sure to convey how she felt about those who failed like Jaune just did.

The real world was a harsh thing Grimm or no Grimm. Although she cannot sympathise to those too weak to take their fates into their own hands, she did note that there were those who were born strong and those who worked to be strong.

Jaune was neither so he had no excuses as far as she was concern. He was good enough to forge transcripts so this should be a piece of

cake to him.

"Then I just have to be stronger?" he wondered. The question was so innocent she wanted to laugh. If it was a matter of just getting stronger than the world would've been a utopia by now.

No, getting stronger wouldn't change anything. And especially not for Jaune who thought on such little ways.

It was time to make him understand how much more he *had* to grow and what his reaction would be to that challenge. If he couldn't... well she guessed mixing in with these teens was harder than she willing to go for.

"No" she glared at him. "You have to be more than just *stronger* . Any competent fighter can deal with the likes of Cardin Winchester. While he is considered... *above average* in combat class, in reality there are just too many ways to defeat him with ease. *Speed. Skill. Power* . You are lacking in all of these things."

And it was the truth. While she already knew that Jaune Arc was not the best fighter out there from a single look, she underestimated how much weaker he was compared to the other students. Even a trained *civilian* without Aura could take him out at his current state.

Aura could only do so much and even his vast reserves were useless without the skill to use it at all.

"... Are you suggesting to train me?" he peevied at her with curiosity and was that *excitement* mixed with horror?

What? It wasn't like she was *bad* at teaching. Look at Emerald and how she ended up. She was a powerful fighter who made use of her semblance to take down foes with ease and her attitude was *perfect* for a tool.

Mercury... she had nothing to do with his training or his attitude.

"Actually *we're* going to train you. All of us" she said. There would be too much to do if she had to babysit him all the time after all.

"What?"

"Huh?"

Both girls looked surprised before a *look* made him retract those faces and turn them into nods of 'understanding'. At least they trusted her enough to play along, especially Pyrrha who seemed to be a lot colder to her than the rest of the team.

Was she still made she stole Jaune as a partner before her?

While she was *superior* in terms of pure power alone, the Champion of Minstrel was a person with an abnormally high level of skill that she might be able to match her for a time and Ruby while still unpolished, she could develop into a formidable foe.

It was an ironic twist of fate that the two students that would be the most trouble against her in her plans would end up in the same team as her. The other students? She could take them all on with ease with time to learn their habits.

It was better to get a gauge on her team-mates true capabilities now when she had the chance. While she had an idea on what Ruby's semblance was, she had no idea on what Pyrrha's was and Cinder had no doubt it had something to do with how she managed to *always* win in a fight four years in a row.

And thanks to Ruby's connection to Team RNBY, she could also scout out the abilities of the other team at the same time. While not on the same level as the team she was on, with the exception of Jaune, they were quite powerful in their own rights.

All of them were among the top students on combat class already. It makes her wonder, why Ozpin allowed Jaune to be among such students with high potentials.

"Wait. How will that even work? I mean I can get Pyrrha training me because my set of sword and shield but you're a dust user right? And Ruby uses a scythe which can't be further away to how I can fight" Jaune said suddenly. He was nervous, afraid even.

Strange. She would need to probe more.

"Silly Jaune" she patted his cheek. "There are more ways than one that you can be *trained* ."

-And more ways to break a man and remake him into a tool.

"I am suddenly more afraid of you than Professor Goodwitch" he carefully stated. He visually shivered and backed away some more as he did.

She chuckled knowing that it was the truth. While the Professor was a skilled Huntress able to match her from their skills in using dust alone, with the power of the Fall Maiden, no matter how incomplete, Cinder was sure she could beat her.

"No one is as scary as Miss Goodwitch!" Ruby cried out in protest

"That's *Professor* Goodwitch Ruby" Pyrrha sighed patting the girl's head. "And remember when Cinder took away your cookies?"

Ruby 'epped' before dashing as far away from Cinder as possible remembering that incident.

"Don't take away my cookies!" she said. Surprisingly enough, she saw the same look on many Faunases oppressed by humanity.

"Are you slacking on studying?" an eyebrow was raised. Ruby amusingly shook her head rapidly enough that she started to get dizzy and by then it was more of a blur than any kind of face. Good, another thing to note about her semblance.

"Then I won't take your cookies" she smiled though her leader seemed to gaze away from her, paling.

Did she not adjust her smile to be pleasant? Another thing to work on then. She needed to act better if she wanted to fool the likes of Ozpin no matter how foolish he was in letting her into his school.

"I fear that we must do extensive training for him to become... *ideal* " she turned to the red-head who scowled back at her. "Will you aid me in this task Pyrrha? Surely you knew some of the *best* ways on building up a body for Jaune to have."

Her partner didn't notice the slight drool that was quickly wiped off of the red-head's face. The girl was surprisingly perverted than most ever realised. A teenage girl would have fantasies of the boy they liked.

Did this mean... Pyrrha liked Jaune? Huh. She didn't know what to feel about that. Well, she can analyse the emotions later. She still needed help if she didn't want to spend all her time with Jaune, training him personally.

"I will help you" Pyrrha said a bit too willingly, seeing how Jaune reacted to that. She ignored his reaction as she looked at her leader, "Cinder has a point in that you *need* to get stronger. Even though we have time... it might be too late if we keep stalling when to start. I don't want you to die."

Cinder had to smirk seeing how the girl looked at *her* when she said that.

"That and you want to keep an eye on me" she tried imitating one of those 'eye-smiles' but it seemed it didn't work. Pyrrha only glared harder at her.

"Of course" Pyrrha retorted. "You don't seem like the type to hold back and would push too much from our leader. Though, why are *you* dictating on what we should do? I get that Jaune needs training but why right now?"

"I agree with this woman" Jaune expressed his unimportant opinion.

"Simple. We must be *exceptional* in all that we do" she paused before sighing at the confused looks. "You are possibly one of the strongest fighters in the school hands down. Ruby is a prodigy noted to have skipped two years to get into Beacon. I'm someone who is an exceptionally powerful dust user. And Jaune? He's our leader. What do you think would happen if he's the only one failing among all of us?"

"That I'm coasting off you all? That I don't deserve to be on the same time as everyone?" the male muttered bitterly. It seemed like this had been brought up before but... when? Was it in the last few days or even before his move to get into Beacon with more dishonourable means?

"Yes" she decided to confirm his fears. "They will say all of that and more but more importantly-"

She got two extra set of glares for that.

"I will not look at anything lower than exceptional, at the top of everyone else. And I intend to drag each and every one of you up with me. I am no once in a century genius suddenly appearing but I am someone who has bled more than most to get where I am right now."

And it was the truth. She was not originally a good fighter, being unskilled in archery and with swords. She bled her hands too many times to count to get this far.

She was not a genius dust user that could bend the elements through sheer instincts. She burnt and froze herself too many times to count to get this far.

Power was earned but some can be taken such in the case of the power of the Maidens. Even the esteemed Pyrrha Nikos wasn't a natural genius that immediately was a *monster* to the eyes of her foes but rather one that worked hard enough to get recognition and never stopped improving.

"I'm feeling you mean more than what you are saying by that" Pyrrha frowned while Cinder only smiled even more.

She was not able to search for the remains of the previous Fall Maiden. *Sure* she could *feel* that she was at Beacon but not exactly where. And with Ozpin on constant guard for her, Cinder had no way of getting to her without a massive and drawn out fight.

"Cinder here has a lot of secrets. You can tell by her smile. It's all twisted up that it's always halfway to a frown" said Jaune.

"Huh?" she blinked in surprise to that analysis.

"What? I can tell how much you *really* want to punish me for embarrassing *you*, you know" he muttered with a cloud of gloom.

Was Jaune... somehow more perceptive when he was depressed?

"I'm surprised you managed to get all of that from a few expressions" she honestly said. She was used to lying more than people would ever trust her for.

"I'm used to knowing how much people are disappointed in me" he waved it off.

However this only caught Cinder's interest even more. Jaune Arc was *not* supposed to be a puzzle to her. He was supposed to be a dim-witted fool she could manipulate. Everything could go wrong if he had 'inner-depth' that she could not see.

She needed to redefy this as soon as possible. Not to mention Pyrrha Nikos was a lot shallower than she expected. And less said about the cookie and heroism mind of Ruby Rose the better for her sanity (there was no way someone could be that innocent).

In a way, her plans were already starting to derail...

"Then what should we start on?" Pyrrha tilted her head. "Normal physical exercise may help but the effects might take too long for

any noticeable effect to appear."

"I suppose evasion training would be the best basis training Jaune can get for now but we shouldn't discount regular exercise to get his stamina up" Cinder mused. "The ability to dodge is surprisingly something that most people seem to lack in and having more stamina to fight is always a good thing."

"Then we can focus on making sure he can use a sword properly before learning to block with one" she continued.

"But he has a shield. And those are generally used for blocking"

"So? Don't tell me that you don't block blows with your weapon when you can? I know that you tend to block that way to make an opening for a counter-attack from that 'fight' you had with that poor student" she decided to level out some praise.

Still, the Huntress shook her head, "The level of skill doing such a thing is currently beyond Jaune. It would take him months if not years to properly time attacking and defending well enough to be a viable strategy. It's better to just focus on making sure he can block attacks before pushing him to think to dodge them."

"Dodging attacks works just as well or even better than blocking. I rather not have my partner fall under poor habits" Cinder argued.

"Poor habits?" Pyrrha's eye twitched. "A poor habit is when you don't use a shield to *block* . Of course, learning how to evade attacks is essential but it isn't the kind of thing you would teach a front-line fighter as the *basis* of their fighting style."

"Honestly I think Jaune will be better off learning to dodge first before trying to block something he can't block" she countered.

"But that's still not a good reason to forgo using a shield completely!"

"I fear that learning how to use *both* a sword and shield is currently beyond him. And using one automatically makes him slower which is why he didn't use one against Cardin... at least I *hope* that is the reason."

"Not really..." Jaune admitted.

"Okay" Cinder nodded. "He's an idiot that has no clue how to fight at all."

"Hey!"

Ignoring the foolish boy that was going to be needed to be trained half to death sooner or later, Cinder moved to address Ruby. Perhaps she had something to say that would convince Pyrrha that making Jaune learn how to dodge was the better idea. She rarely met someone so stubborn in their belief.

Then again, usually all she needed to do was flash her chest a bit or her leg and they would agree with her. Cinder wasn't planning on seducing her team for one.

"Ruby. Will you help us aid Jaune in his training?" she asked.

"Yeah sure" Ruby's reply came with a shrug. "But I don't get why you two are focusing so much on whether he should learn how to dodge or block. He can learn to do both."

"I fear it's more complicated than that" she kindly said to the girl.

"Is it?" Ruby shook her head. "Jaune needs to learn how to fight but that doesn't mean he will always be sticking to dodging or blocking. Being flexible is a lot more important. He needs to learn how to *fight* not dodge or block blows."

Cinder thought about it and realised she was focusing a bit too much on one aspect at a time. It was in fact better to spread out his

training to multiple areas so he was much more rounded but there was a problem with that.

"My partner needs to get stronger as soon as possible. Covering all areas to avoid clear weaknesses will take too long. Focusing on one thing before moving to another will speed things up considerably when it comes to not sucking at fighting."

"Isn't unbalancing his training what we're trying to avoid?" Pyrrha asked. Her look was full of skepticism.

"Not exactly. Jaune is our *leader* and we know that he isn't good in a fight. Better to train him so he can survive than expect him to climb his way up to our level anytime soon."

"So... you're saying we'll be training Jaune to survive rather than to actually win?" Ruby looked in disbelief. "Didn't you bring this up because Jaune didn't win to begin with?"

"Yes" Cinder nodded. "But the first step to winning is actually surviving."

And at the same time, getting multiple perspectives is a good way to make sure there isn't some flawed logic somewhere. Training Jaune was going to be a long-term thing and she wouldn't have all the time to just focus on him. It was best to get the team in this as well.

Pyrrha seemed happy enough to send her aid but what about Ruby?

"Any ideas of what kind of training Jaune should have Ruby?" she asked in the kindest tone she could manage.

"Hmm..." Ruby thought about it. "Maybe make him go through training to prevent him from flinching? That's what Uncle Qrow started me off on. Hesitation on the battlefield can kill. So all we have to do is scare Jaune until he can't be scared anymore! Or when he doesn't react that much to being scared."

"Great idea" Cinder nodded. *That* was something she never would've considered. That lesson was already ingrained into her bones by the time she started her training. It was do or die back then and there were no second chances and many of the comrades she gathered were the same as her in that regard.

She was admittedly a bit jealous that someone actually taught Ruby that instead of life cruelly doing it for her.

"Shouldn't I have a say on what kind of training I want to get? I mean, I'm *not* going to run through the Emerald Forest just because you all thought it was a good idea!" Jaune spoke his dissatisfaction loudly.

"Not at all" she immediately denied. "If you had it your way, we might as well wish for you to magically get stronger one day."

"I'm not *that* bad. I *do* exercise and make sure to practise with my sword" he protested. It was weak though.

"But how much progress have you made with only self-practise? Pyrrha is exceptionally skilled with weaponry and even an hour with her will be more than a month of progress training on your own" she snorted.

Why people insisted on their pride only to fall short and weaker than others was beyond her. Better not let his pride get hold else his ego might cause him to do something truly foolish later on.

"W-Well..." he tried to think of another argument but failed.

She rolled her eyes and immediately decided to cut away a particular one she was sure he would be able to come to with time.

"Being a 'tactician' is almost useless for a Hunter and those who say so are just trying to be kind to you. A Hunter fights at speeds that are beyond normal human and there is no time to even *think*. Teamwork is ingrained as instincts though countless hours of practise" she

continued to say. "Well I suppose your mind *can* be useful for making new ways to train at least."

"Did you have to put me down like that?" his shoulders slumped. "I wasn't even going to make *that* argument. I was more luck than anything else that allowed me to look like I knew I was doing."

"Trust me. You knew more than what you thought you knew you were doing."

"Is that a new tongue twister?" Ruby muttered under her breath.

Cinder could only roll her eyes again hearing that. "We can start your training when you're all healed up. Next time, you better make Cardin eat dirt or *else* ."

She looked away as Pyrrha took that as a confirmative that she should help patch him up. Large Aura reserves or not, bruises weren't things that could be instantly healed by a novice user like Jaune.

Now all she had to do was endure the boring process of training someone from scratch without maiming someone.

A/N: Oh Cinder, did you really think partnering with Jaune was a good idea? Sure the principle of masking yourself as a helpful partner was sound in theory but not at all in practise. Reality is often more gritty and disappointing then we expect. It's one thing to know that you have to team up with someone incompetent to actually experience it. Is it no wonder why she would want to push Jaune to get stronger as fast as possible so she didn't need to take care of him so much?

Anyway, this chapter is among one of the harder ones write up simply because this is literally the half-way point of the story and I can't show everything that would happen in between the beginning of the year to the halfway point to the dance. Did this

story just use the Initiation Test as half its content? Yes, yes it did. The reason is simply because this had always been intended as a short series. And when I say short, I really meant short.

Know that this chapter and the next chapter will have a *massive* time-skip even if you don't immediately see it. Months of school-life, dialogue and character interaction and development skipped. Like I said, this series will be *short* and this is planned so I don't spend months writing this series rather than a week or two.

I know that people will complain on how the story took a dive from this point on... and well that's kinda expected seeing the pace of the story changing so much.

Also there will be a lot of stuff that happens in the background that you guys won't see that changes things a lot of things. Well, I think I can sum all of that up in the epilogue when that comes.

Chapter 7

Disclaimer: I own nothing of RWBY which belongs to Rooster Teeth and the late Monty Owm.

Chapter 7: Where Cinder corrupts the Team

It was official. His team was filled with *sadists* . It wasn't just Cinder that he feared felt too much excitement to him being injured and pushed around painfully from the *hell* he was being placed through but also the innocent Ruby and reliable Pyrrha as well.

They had even taken away his shield for this training as well. How was he supposed to block attacks without it?

"Get ready to feel more pain~" Cinder almost *cheerfully* declared as she used just her arms and legs to *kick his ass* more times than Cardin would ever do.

Whether it was attacking, defending or even simply dodging, Cinder was a *monster* equal to Pyrrha when it came to making him feel insignificant. He moved to attack again, at least by that admission he actually *tried* to win.

Cinder responded by side-stepping lightly before tripping him over with a single leg.

"Ow!" he grumbled as he was kicked another three times away while on the ground. It was horrible but he was starting to get used to the pain, the bruises and being beaten up. Jaune wondered if there was something wrong with him.

"That attack was *pathetic* Jaune! No wonder you lost to someone like Cardin!" his partner shouted at him.

"The training would probably help if I knew what the goal of it was!" he retorted.

"You haven't figured it out yet? I even talked about it with the girls in front of your face" she huffed before moving to kick him again. He tried blocking but the power of the kick was strong enough that he was blown back anyway.

"You have to *dodge* Jaune!" Ruby sort of helpfully added on the sidelines. She was clearing for Cinder of course while Pyrrha was at least polite enough to do the same.

"Dodge?" he wondered before looking at his sword. "Then why am I carrying my weapon out like this?"

"Because I highly doubt that you would go into a battle without your weapon" Cinder rolled her eyes. "It's better to get you used to the weight and the options you have with the weapon than without right now."

"And the reason I'm not using a shield?"

"Simply because you're not learning how to *block* but rather to *dodge* blows that would've been simple to allow you to actually make a proper performance against Cardin" she said.

After saying that, his partner spent the next minute drilling into his body when it meant to be hit at various locations without pause. He didn't even have time to think as he tried desperately to dodge as many blows as possible but failing at every single turn. Jaune knew he was going to be hurting tomorrow...

" *Wait !* How am I supposed to learn if you don't actually *teach* me anything?!" he shouted when the attacks slowed down momentarily.

The next blow hit his stomach. *Hard* . And send him flying back. It was at that moment that he recalled that Cinder had told everyone that she was 'bad' at close-combat. He would say that she was

bullshitting them or that her other abilities were that monstrous if she was this good at something she was 'weak' at.

"I *am* teaching you. Your body that is" she simply said before proceeding to beat him up for *another* minute.

This cycle repeated itself several more times as for a full minute, Cinder would have no mercy towards Jaune in how badly he did while venting out her stress before slowing down enough that he would get a few words in before it started up again.

It was only after a full ten minutes that Jaune was too exhausted to move anymore that she had stopped.

"I expected-no *expect* you to have more stamina as she continue this training" Cinder looked down at him. "While having high technical skills is praiseworthy though not something you have, lasting longer than your opponent is often a way to achieve victory."

"Basically you're telling me that if I managed to outlast Cardin then I would win?"

"Well that's if you somehow managed to dodge any of his attacks. I was going easy on you and even managed to convince myself to slow myself down to the same speed Cardin had during short periods for you to experience the fool's *speed* ."

Jaune thought about it before saying, "You mean the times when you were slow enough that I could *maybe* dodge once or twice?"

"Yes" she nodded. "Cardin Winchester as you know is a power-type fighter meaning he uses brute strength more than speed or skill to take down his foes."

"Compared to him, Pyrrha is a skill-based fighter whose skills with her weapon is unmatched while Ruby is a speed-based fighter that can as easily make you unable to touch her as she is easily able to take your life" she continued.

"I... see. And what about me? Or you?" he asked.

"You?" a cruel smirk appeared on her face. "You're far too weak to be categorised in any area. I on the other hand admit to be the power-type like Cardin but *far* superior in every way. I can actually keep up with Ruby and Pyrrha for one."

It was at that moment that the rest of the team appeared near him. Ruby tackled him into a friendly hug while Pyrrha patted his shoulder.

"You got beaten up!" the littlest Huntress said a *bit* too enthusiastically.

Pyrrha on the other hand was much more mature at least. "You shouldn't move that much. Your wounds are bruising and should be hurting right about now."

"Yeah..." now that she mentioned it. His everything was hurting, all at the same time. He let out a groan of pain before trying; quite unsuccessfully to not move so he didn't end up quite literally roll into the pain.

"Well then" Pyrrha laughed lightly, "I think you should take a break before I coach you on the *finer* details on fighting and not losing."

"Urgh."

He wasn't looking forward to that. He knew that sore muscles would make even the simplest task that the red-head thought it would be into a massive challenge for him to face. Still... he was getting stronger this way, right?

"Unlike what you have practised, using the sword starts off as a routine before becoming more flexible the more skilled you are" Pyrrha explained holding and guiding his hand and arms to where they should move.

"Some ancient texts hold that the foundations of any kind of combat lies in the eight different points you can deal a fatal blow to an enemy. However this accounts for only human opponents and not Grimm" she continued.

"If that's the case then why are you telling me this?" he asked before swinging once.

Pyrrha immediately motioned and corrected his stance before moving him to do the swing a second time which seemed more 'correct' in her eyes seeing that she nodded to it.

It still hurt his muscles when he moved too forcefully. He silently cursed Cinder in his mind where he would not be judged by her.

"Because, just because Hunters are expected to fight Grimm doesn't mean we will end up fighting other humans sooner or later. Bandits and terrorists are some such foes that some may end up fighting sooner or later especially with the White Fang being more active" she explained.

"Which is why combat class is almost exclusively against human opponents and how to beat them. Aside from allowing the professors an easy way to correct possibly fatal mistakes that might work on humans but not Grimm" Cinder injected.

"Huh."

He wondered how Miss Goodwitch knew how to do *that* without any practise on Grimm on the first place. Sure they were all expected to know how to fight Grimm thanks to how initiation was structured but-

"Jaune. Pay attention" Pyrrha ordered. He blushed before she continued. "With your sword which is a bit primitive compared to modern Hunter weapons, you really have a few options available for you and fewer without a shield."

"Namely, your sword is pretty good at stabbing and slashing at people and nothing else" said Ruby. "You should really get an upgrade with a gun-option."

"Don't have the money... or really the time to learn how to fight with a new weapon like that Ruby" he sighed. If he could then he would. Seeing everyone else using weapons that could transform and comparing it to his own...

Well inadequate was the least of what he was feeling. Not to mention without a range option, he was quite limited in how he could fight.

"You think I could just get a pistol to use a side-arm if I need to fire at something?" he wondered.

Cinder hit his head before retorting, "Getting a gun means you need *more* training to use it alone and even *more* to combine it using a sword or shield alternatively. Don't give us more work to get you *decent* at fighting."

"Sorry sorry" he chuckled before asking, "So I can only stab or slash... that mean I have two moves I can use with Crocea Mors?"

"Not really" Pyrrha shrugged, "You can stab forward, slash from the left, slash from the right and slash from the top. If you were faster or more mobile then you could also attack directly from above or from below as well."

"That's still four different move-sets to learn, well *eight* if you count one-handed to two-handed wielding" he pointed out.

All three girls looked at each other before Cinder patted Pyrrha's shoulder before saying, "See. He *can* learn. And to think you would feel that he needed the *full* explanation to learn anything from you."

Ruby giggled to those words and even Pyrrha couldn't help but to let out a chuckle.

"Oi!" Jaune waved his sword in protest. He noticed that all three girls immediately stood *slightly* differently than before as if they were ready to spring into action. Was this what someone trained to be a Hunter looked like?

"Is there *anything* else I need to learn from you Pyrrha?" he asked.

"Stances, mainly. How to balance your body to defence, to attack or even to dodge. The better you are in this, the more 'solid' you are in a fight though I believe Cinder means for you to naturally choose to dodge before your mind decides to attack or defence first" she eyed his partner.

"Of course. Jaune would take *months* to learn how to properly fight like everyone else. While short-term, he can learn how to not *lose* in a matter of weeks even if he lacks variety in fighting" said Cinder before nodding at the red-head.

The next moment, Cinder started dragging Ruby away from the field they were practising at before Pyrrha held her own weapon in her hand without a shield as well.

"Eh, what's happening?" he looked at his team with surprise.

"We're going to spar" Pyrrha stated, weapon pointed at him and stance wide.

"Why?!"

"Because that's the only way you'll fully integrate my teachings in you. Your body needs to learn how to fight from me just as it will learn how to dodge from Cinder" she said. She smiled sadly before adding, "Sorry but I will hold back enough that Ruby can have a turn."

"Ruby has a turn?!" he shouted out in fear.

If stage one was Cinder, stage two was Pyrrha... he didn't want to know of what condition his body would be in when he went into Ruby's hands. Not to mention what insane task she would set him to become stronger.

"Didn't you listen when we discuss this?" she asked, frowning.

"Honestly, I lost track especially when my opinion wasn't considered" he admitted though if Pyrrha felt anything to that, she didn't openly react. She was in a combat stance after all and they were in a spar.

She wasn't a champion or something for nothing if she didn't let her guard down for even a moment.

Knowing that he was going to get his ass kick by *also* Pyrrha, Jaune settled down his nerves for the long-haul. This was going to be painful but it was *Pyrrha*. Maybe she would actually hold back on him.

"Remember that a calm mind is the most important thing in a fight" was all the warning he got when a bronze shield bashed into his face.

Wha-

He was wrong, *very* wrong in that Pyrrha 'holding-back' was anything good for him. In some ways, she was even worse than Cinder when it came to kicking his ass. She did not forgive openings in his guards and poked into his defence every time he made a mistake.

More than that, the opening of the spar practically was the *opposite* of calm in that he panicked. Badly. Not that Pyrrha used the shield ever again in the rest of the spar. The simple act of catching him off-guard made the rest of his performance... lacking.

Basically a *lot* of times, more than he could count.

Now he was lying on the ground, his muscles pretty much mush at this point with no way to move. Class had fortunately ended though he doubted he would be able to do this kind of training day after days without rest.

"How did he do?" he heard Ruby ask.

"Better than expected but worse than what he needs to do to stay above the bottom of the class. Though that may just be because I surprised him bringing my shield into the fight when he didn't expect it" Pyrrha replied.

"That's a lot better than I had expected. In a week we can make him a *decent* fighter that actually stands a chance against other students in class. In a month we could make him reach the average of the class if we keep on pushing him like this every single day."

He groaned painfully to that suggestion.

"If we let Jaune rest to take care of his studies he might get to the average of the class in a few months instead though. No point in making sure he's barely strong enough only to fail in every single other class he has" said Cinder.

"Does this mean I can't do my part of the training for Jaune?" Ruby whined.

"Not for now" Pyrrha shook her head sadly. "Jaune first needs to be trained enough that he can actually stand up by the time it's your turn. Besides, your training might be useful but it's the least important of the training we discussed before."

Jaune hoped that he would get stronger, only so the pain would stop at this point.

"Jaune! You will do our homework right? That is something that even you can do."

"O-Of c-course. But I have to go meet with my team-"

"No time for that. You'll be doing it now so you won't have time for them anymore."

It had been weeks... a few *months* since she had entered Beacon to infiltrate it and there had been no issue so far. Security around the possible locations of the Fall Maiden remained tight as well as the CCTV Tower. As expected, she would need to act during the school dance or Vytal Festival if she wanted to get into either of those places.

Considering her plans, she would need to get into the CCTV Tower first to plant a virus before moving onto to collect the rest of *her* power later on. It wouldn't make due if she was caught and forced to escape without achieving both of her plans after all.

"Ozpin may be a fool but he has been in the game longer than me" she muttered.

At the moment, there was no point considering her plans since they haven't changed. Instead she turned her attention to the reports that Emerald had sent her.

Besides keeping them a secret from her team, she had little to no time to give them more than basic instructions for Emerald and Mercury. However, fortunately things seemed to be going fine outside her direct supervision. The White Fang have been geared against Vale more and Torchwick had almost finished stealing enough Dust for her plans.

Another few months and the large amount of Dust would be in the hands of the White Fang to 'breach' Vale with countless Grimm invading as a result. Everyone would suspect the White Fang including themselves of this act and no one would notice the *strings* that were pulling the bunch of rabid animals along.

(Because really, they were a bit too easy to manipulate to kill and slaughter countless)

Eventually, her mind reached back to her team and issues she had to deal with them now. It wasn't big or dramatic as the reveal that Blake Belladonna was a Faunas and 'worse' once part of the White Fang but it could eventually evolve into that level.

That was something she did not want. Therefore she had to deal with this issue now and she really didn't know what to do. If it was her, she would've destroyed everyone who dared opposed her. Jaune was... not her.

He was being bullied. It was as simple as that.

It was small, subtle and something that no ordinary person would notice but he was indeed being *bullied*. People whispered behind his back, snickering at things that they could only laugh out in the protection of the crowds. They talked bad about him and didn't respect him at all while not even facing him without large numbers.

What else could you call such a people besides 'bullies'? Of course, there were a few that took the cake on trying to dominate others in the school's social ladder. They of all people were the most desperate to boost their egos in the end.

In fact, she wasn't surprised Jaune was being bullied; she had expected it to happen sooner or later.

The leader of Team JCNR was not a remarkable person and this was never more apparent compared to his team-mates. Compared to the Invincible Girl, Young Prodigy and *especially* herself, how could Jaune ever compare? He was lacking in his studies and worse he was lacking in his fighting skills.

More than that, Jaune's friends in Team RNBY were all exceptional people as well with three-fourths being girls as well.

To the jealous males, Jaune had three pretty girls on his team while being friends with three more pretty girls on another team. In combination of everything else, Cinder had no doubts on why people seem to like to whisper behind his back and spread bad rumours about him.

He was a better target than Ren.

'Teenagers' she snorted, *'They think that their petty games will amount to anything'*

True influence comes with power. And power comes from forcing everyone else to acknowledge that you are superior to them. Jaune would need to 'prove' himself in their eyes for all the rumours and minor acts of bullying against him to stop.

But as much as Cinder wanted to ignore this (as it was *beneath* her), it was getting out of hand with people believing they had the right to act as they pleased. Jaune was starting to be openly mocked now and soon it would transcend into physical act against him while the school watched by.

She knew all of this would stop when Jaune fought back but he had to do so in such a way that left *no opening* for anyone to go against him. Her partner was simply not the type of person who had vengeance on his mind to do such a thing.

Still, the blonde being bullied also meant Team JCNR being disrespected by extension.

Bullies in a school setting like this were like vultures waiting for prey. You could not give them ground and even then you might need to stomp them all out to remove the dirt. And Team CRNL proved themselves to such people during the visit to Forever Fall where they *tried* to pour syrup that *attracted* Grimm onto *Jaune* .

It had been a close thing when Cinder pulled the blonde away from the glass jar that had been intentionally tossed him. They could not

find out who did throw the glass jar but they had their suspicions considering that Team CRNL wasn't exactly hiding their plans or their complaints when they failed.

'It was a bit laughable on how easy it was to confirm that it was indeed them who had the intention of harm Jaune' she mused.

Well, if they were so fine with someone dying because of their actions, then they would not have any problems if others did the same to them. That and Cinder had little pity for them especially since Jaune was *her* territory.

"Ruby, Pyrrha, we need to talk about some matters" she said and motioned for them to follow her. Jaune thankfully was off to the library for more study materials that he needed for the moment.

Making they were in private she got to the point immediately. "We need to deal with Team CRNL before they actually get Jaune hurt. Forever Fall might have been minor but that was only because we managed to keep him safe."

"The syrup" Pyrrha realised first, "They attract Grimm and if Jaune was covered in it..."

She looked horrified to that implementation just at the same time Ruby did.

"What do we do? Do we tell the Headmaster about this?" asked Ruby.

Cinder shook her head. "The Headmaster has an off-hands approach when it comes to his students. For example, Velvet has been bullied by Team CRNL and yet none of the teachers have done anything to correct it."

Of course, she suspected it was more of a lesson that if you didn't do anything then people will step on you but throwing dirt at Ozpin was a habit at this point. Still Team CRNL was becoming a pain

considering their leader had started to snoop into the backgrounds of other students to get more dirt.

It was unsavoury to some but smart. Knowing more about those you want to manipulate was a good idea and she didn't have any doubts that Cardin would eventually find out certain information that could 'hinder' a couple of students.

-Including hers.

Though it would not matter if he actually found out about her forged transcripts, it would however bring more attention to her which she was using Jaune as a shield for if the fool started to tattle everyone about it. Her plans would be hindered... and even if Ozpin did nothing, she would still be annoyed by the increased number of eyes on her.

Therefore it was better to get rid of them now before any issues came up.

Especially since she suspected that they had found out that *Jaune* had faked his transcripts to get into Beacon.

"Frankly, Cardin has become *too* arrogant recently" she started to say. "The teachers seem to have no intentions of helping us deal with this which leaves us to deal with him. Chances are, Cardin will continue to escalate more and more until someone gets hospitalised and if *that* doesn't stop him he might end up killing someone because no one did anything to stop him."

"I'm sure the teachers will actually stop Cardin if it ever goes to that point" Pyrrha disagreed.

"Then have you noticed him *openly* bullying Velvet?" she asked.

Ruby's eyes lit up to that, "Of course, Jaune stepped in to help her!"

Jaune did and he was the prime target of the bullying no matter how many eyes she placed on him. There was only so much she could do without confronting the issue directly.

"Yes and now Cardin is bullying *him* instead. Jaune just made himself into a *target* when we need him to work more on his training. He had already made a couple of excuses to dodge training recently right?"

"... Yes."

"And he had been eating with *them* as well right?"

"... Yes. What do you want us to do? This is Jaune's choice in the end" the red-head sighed.

"Choice?" she tilted her head. "If you put a knife to a person's neck and told them to give you money is that really a choice? Cardin basically has blackmail on Jaune and is using it to get what he wants."

Cinder rolled her eyes seeing the surprised looks of the partners.

"I suspect I know what Jaune is hiding that he doesn't want everyone to know. If it's that, our leader would think he would have no choice but to obey Cardin no matter what. And when do you think that Cardin will ask Jaune to do something *illegal*... like stealing things or even finding out things about people that he can use such our ourselves?"

"But... Carin wouldn't do that... right?" Ruby nervously asked.

"Perhaps, perhaps not. Think about on the person you know as Cardin Winchester and think if he *wouldn't* do that because he could" she shrugged.

"...."

"...."

"And then there's the little fact that Cardin might actually end up *killing* someone at this rate. People believing they have no limits to consider when dealing with other people often treat them badly" she added. Cinder was completely *bullshitting* right now if it helped her to convince them then-

"B-But even Cardin wouldn't kill anyone" Ruby protested. And she was honestly right. Beneath everything else, Cardin Winchester was unlikely to actually *intentionally* harm a person with malice.

"He might not intentionally" Cinder argued, not caring if or why the fool would or could do such a thing.

As long as he's out of her way she's fine with any results. "But considering what he and his team tried to do with Jaune, they are starting to get out of hand. And when they do..."

"People will get hurt and eventually someone will be unlucky enough to be killed by their actions" Pyrrha finished. "But I don't see why *we* should be the ones who have to stop him. Jaune already has a lot on his hand and putting more onto his hands is unadvised."

"Who says we need to get Jaune involved?" she asked.

Anyone who knew Jaune knew that he couldn't hide a secret if it meant his life... unless it *really* meant his life. He did surprisingly well in hiding the fact that he had faked his transcripts though that may be due to confidence that he would eventually turn the lie into the truth.

"What? Why on earth *wouldn't* we involve Jaune in a decision this large? And more importantly why are you saying this as if we already decided to do this at all" Pyrrha questioned.

"Because-" Cinder intentionally paused for a moment, "If we don't then Jaune will be one of Carin's victims and I don't want to see that."

"Headmaster. Mr Winchester seemed to have a giant boulder dropped on him" Glynda reported. She was frowning thinly and that was never a good sign. Better to get through this now, he supposed.

Ozpin adjusted his cane before stepping over to view Beacon again before asking, "Hmm... a training accident?"

These things weren't rare as he would've liked. Then again, dodging giant boulders was good training to avoid Grimm leaping on you.

"No, someone intentionally dropped one on him. He was in his team room when this happened but fortunately, the rest of his team are fine if only traumatised from this incident" she explained.

That was a surprise.

"Any clues on the perpetrator or perpetrators? Mr Winchester isn't the most popular student so there may be a variety of people who may have issues with him and would resort to this" he asked.

"A few" she admitted. "The top of the list would be Miss Scarlatina as Mr Winchester is a known Faunas racist. After that would be various other Faunas before we have some of the poorer achieving students such as Mr Arc."

"Hmm... send Mr Arc in first. I doubt he has anything to do with this but he might slip out something we could use" he ordered.

Well he had little intention to actually punishing anyone. They didn't do anything to help the victims of Cardin's bullies so why would they help Cardin himself? The most damaging thing Mr Winchester did was trap Mr Arc in his rocket locker before firing it into the Emerald Forest that one time.

If Mr Arc wasn't skilled enough, he would've died. Therefore Ozpin, Headmaster of Beacon really didn't care if no one was blamed with the incident of Cardin Winchester being hospitalised.

Then again, if they died from this, then they were not fit to be Hunters.

A/N: Well this got... well I can't say 'dark' because it didn't but things got a bit serious. So yeah, Cinder planned and dropped a literal boulder onto Cardin... now that I look back on this I wonder what I was thinking. Anyway this takes place *after* Forever Fall meaning I completely skipped that part. Which means I also skipped the fact that Cardin had been bullying Jaune.

I feel that some things don't really change no matter what little differences happens. Whether Jaune actually stood up to Cardin or not, the tall guy would eventually look into the blonde's way for one reason or another and find it in him to bully him. And then Cinder would feel that Jaune didn't do enough (or anything) to correct this and retaliate with (near) lethal force.

Anyway I'm off to actually try and finish the rest of the chapters before my posting reach that point.

Chapter 8

Disclaimer: I own nothing of RWBY which belongs to Rooster Teeth and the late Monty Owm.

Chapter 8: Where Cinder makes Trouble

"Is that all Headmaster?" he asked.

"Of course" the older and much wiser man nodded back at him. "Do make note that I cannot protect your team from the repercussion if they are discovered or cause too much of an incident. You are lucky that they chose to go against Mr Winchester as... he is not that popular" before being directed to the elevator.

That got a snort out of him, "Cardin isn't that popular is like saying he's a Faunas lover. I'm frankly more surprised that he remains *alive* considering Cinder's personality and the fact that he forced me to miss a couple of training sessions in a row."

The fact that he had a feeling the training was going to get worse even if temporary was something he wasn't looking forward to.

"Ah... Miss Fall. Do keep an eye on her" The Headmaster said.

"Of course" he walked through the elevator door before punching the button back down.

He had a lot to think about and more to talk to his team about. Lots of things like how Beacon always knew that he had faked his transcripts but also the fact that Cinder did the same to get into this school.

The blond sighed, why did things have to be so complicated? He wasn't that mad for being left out by the team... but he had to clean up after them in the end.

Jaune was confused, tired and stressed out and the day hadn't even properly begun yet. And he wanted answers.

"So... are we not going to talk about what happened to Cardin?" he nervously shuffled in place as he forked another piece of pancake into his mouth.

Point, Jaune wasn't exactly the best at confronting people and it showed. The team had been eating a lot more pancakes ever since Nora lectured *all* of them about the 'glory' of pancakes. That and Ren had pretty good sauce to go with the pancakes.

"What about him?" Cinder smiled politely which only cause him to shiver in place. The way the Headmaster told him to keep an eye on her... implied something bad and he was feeling it right now.

"He's has been hospitalised with many of his bones broken and some of his organs even crushed under a *boulder* " he managed to deadpanned.

Scanning the table, it was only Pyrrha and Ruby who flinched to that. He sighed, so they were also involved after all. Naturally Cinder was involved in this... somehow.

"Wait, Cardin had been *hospitalised* ?!" Yang blurted out.

"Yes."

" *That* Cardin. The same one that kicked your ass in combat class and managed to be seen as a massive bully by the rest of the school?"

" Yes " he stressed out the word.

Yang blinked for a few moments before saying, "Should we be celebrating then?"

" *No!* " he slammed his hands on the table before he realised he was breathing heavily. Ignoring the looks he was getting he tried calming down because Cardin being in the hospital was *not* a good thing because *his* team caused it.

And chances are, everyone else knew it as well.

More than that, the rest of Team CRNL that weren't injured was actively avoiding his team now. It was quite easy to see *who* was responsible for nearly killing a student at Beacon. Via giant boulder no less that *somehow* managed to crash exactly at where Team CRNL's leader was standing without harming anyone else in the team.

The *hyper* -elaborate set-up to allow for said boulder to actually crash into the hospitalised victim was also found coming to Team JCNR's room as well which was quite damning for his team.

He supposed that had something to do with Cinder and was intentional because normally she wouldn't make a basic mistake like that.

"I just had to talk to the Headmaster about that this morning and I didn't even have a clue that Cardin was actually hospitalised before I got there. So no celebrating no matter how much some of us wants to" he gave his team the look.

"Okay...? Were you punished?"

Jaune slammed his head into the table hearing that question.

"Yes. I was *punished* by that when I had no idea that it happened or even had a chance to stop it" he gritted out.

"Wait you were punished?!" exclaimed Ruby. He ignored for her the moment.

It was only a few extra classes, extra classes that would cut into his admittedly low amount of free time already.

He wasn't going to even bother to think *why* they did this.

The action of the team reflected the leader in the end and his team decided to reflect that he had no control over them and that they could step all over him. One of his roles as leader was to make sure his team didn't do anything *stupid* because they were *his* responsibility. It was something that he had apparently been slacking on for too long.

Although he didn't want to think about it, people would be placing him on the same level as *Cardin* when it came to how they treated people. That was not a good thing at all and the number of potential friends and even acquaintances was rapidly decreasing the more the rumours were spreading.

"Tell me team. Did you have any good reasons for excluding me from your little... adventure?" he asked carefully. He was one stop away from shouting at him.

"Well that meant you had good plausible deniability" his partner answered in a way that he knew meant she didn't care at all of what just happened.

Ruby nodded along absently poking her pancakes repeating, "Plausible deniability is good. No one can do anything to you even if you actually had stolen the cookie jar."

Even Pyrrha went along with this madness!

"Well it couldn't have happened to anyone less deserving of some punishment. Perhaps now he would focus on his studies rather than mocking other people when he can for his own ego" the red-head said without a pause.

"You can't be serious?!" he shouted.

If he didn't know better, he would've thought they were actually working together. No, they were working together which was the strange thing. Over the weeks he had gotten to know them, he more or less knew the team dynamic even as they all 'co-operated' to train him in their own mad ways.

His partner, Cinder wasn't the best liked person in the team even to those outside it. She was haughty and naturally looked down at people even without knowing it. Whether it was due to how narrow her eyes came to express her emotions or the way her face usually stayed just off a smirk at any moment didn't give her a friendly appearance.

Pyrrha seemed to have reacted worst to her and was naturally antagonistic to his partner. Whether it was due to some combat instinct or a developed sense from her time of fame in the spotlight, the red-head could tell from the very beginning that Cinder wasn't exactly someone you would want to trust completely even if she actually trying to honestly help you.

Ruby on the other hand was much more trusting but learnt to fear Cinder. The younger girl was honestly friendly towards Cinder until she kept her cookies away for not studying and further started burning the cookies as punishment when her warning was not heeded. That did not give her any points to Pyrrha who comforted Ruby while Jaune tried to stop the team fallout with minimal success.

At least they weren't trying to kill each other.

... Even though he was sure that Miss Goodwitch paired them up often just to let them vent. Cinder for a dust user and supposed 'bad at close-combat' was surprisingly skilled and powerful enough to match Pyrrha and more than often actually win against the champion known for being 'unbeatable'.

So yeah, that was lie Cinder told them that was uncovered pretty quickly. Knowing her as much as he did, Jaune supposed that she

was attempting to lose but her pride got the hang of her and ended up causing her to beat Pyrrha.

Sighing Jaune propped his face into his hands. His team seemed to be denying that they had anything to do with what happened to Cardin while avoiding the issue.

"Please don't go around hurting people. I can't believe I'm saying this but attacking people outside of sparring of any kind at Beacon is wrong. I thought everyone got this memo from common sense a while ago" he glared at each and every one of them.

"Silly Jaune!" Nora from Team RNBY spoke up, "There is always time for hurting people when you're breaking their legs!"

And wasn't that frightening from such a cheerful girl.

"Well you got to admit" Yang spoke up then. "The giant boulder was a nice touch. Even Blake had to appreciate the classics on someone like Cardin."

"I... didn't say that?" Blake looked warily as if she was going to be judge but calmed down with a pat from Yang. Hmm... there was something going on there but he shouldn't look into it. It was probably private.

"But you all but said it with you actually smiling to the news Jaune brought~" Blake of Team RNBY was pulled into a hug.

Yang grinned letting go of Blake after a moment before high-fiving her sister. If there was any doubt that somehow his team was being framed in his mind, it disappeared then. He groaned knowing that he already had to take supplement classes on how to keep his team in check. Now he was going to be used as an example there.

He was not looking forward to it.

He looked to Ren who was suffering the same fate as him with Nora though it was just Nora. Yang and Blake were sensible enough to not cause him trouble-wait. Yang was Ruby's sister and he doubted that the littlest member of his team wouldn't keep her sister out of the insane plan.

"Ruby..." he cautiously said. "Did you get Yang involved with what happened to Cardin?"

The blush on her face said everything he needed to know. Turning over to face the other blonde on the table he carefully asked, "Yang? Did you get Blake involved with what happened to Cardin?"

"I have no idea what you mean" she said flatly. Blake's face was blank as much as she could as well.

Jaune felt another groan come up and wondered how far this conspiracy went? Was it possible that other teams were involved and allowed the blame to fall entirely on him, someone who did nothing? Cardin wasn't exactly the most popular type but got through with force.

That made more enemies than you would think and there would be many who would've been involved as far as ignoring something incriminating happening or even supplying items to be used. While he knew his team was quite capable in a number of things, he couldn't believe they were that good to sneak by everything without anyone seeing and reporting it.

In other words, this was one big mess he didn't want to clean up after.

Chances were that he had to anyway.

"How do you keep Nora from breaking people's legs?" he asked seriously. That was something he wanted to know. If so, then he might be able to keep his team from overdoing things again.

Ren gave him a long-suffering look.

"I don't. I can only contain the fallout... or bribe her with pancakes. Lots of pancakes with my special sauce."

All of a sudden he felt jealous that he had the option to slave away to stop his partner from rampaging. Jaune quickly realised he didn't have much leverage with his team when it came to making them do things they didn't want to do. Sure Pyrrha might do so because it was polite but Ruby would more often just disappear with her speed and Cinder...

Well he preferred not to think about what happened when he tried forcing her to do something she didn't want to do.

His face always got hotter when he tried thinking about it. Knowing how much she liked fire, she probably threatened to burn him or something along those lines.

"God, what am I supposed to do with my team?" he muttered. He really didn't have much control over them. Was he a good leader at all then? What was the point of being leader when his team did shit like this without warning?

It was with such sorrowful thoughts that Jaune did not notice the looks that his team were giving him and each other before they nodded.

"So... Jaune is now depressed because we didn't get him in the plan" Ruby spoke carefully. Though they were in an empty classroom, they still didn't have the same privacy as their team room.

More importantly, Jaune wasn't here with them.

"I think it's more because he couldn't stop us from breaking Cardin not that he wasn't part of it... or that he even cared Cardin was

harmful from all of this" Pyrrha corrected.

"True. It's only natural that he is somewhat depressed. Something big happened and he wasn't involved when we were. It only got worse in his mind since part of the blame was laid onto him because of us" Cinder shrugged carelessly.

The red-head couldn't help but to grit her teeth and glare at her seeing this. It was this absent of care that made her always think that her team-mate was hiding something. However Pyrrha had to admit that most the time, Cinder did have the team on her mind.

But apparently not this time and now Jaune was paying the price. Even if the price was only a couple of lessons on how to manage the team better, it spoke more than words on their leader's skills on actually leading them.

"And that only happened because you didn't want him involved in the plans you made" she spat out.

"Oh but didn't you agree that getting Jaune involved was a bad idea?"

"T-That's..." She had no answer to that.

It was in a different context but nonetheless, Pyrrha did agree that having Jaune involved with something so malicious wouldn't be a good idea. Plausible deniability after all was what Cinder used to convince her in the end. But it seemed her intentions failed and it only made things worse.

"But why was Jaune so sad then? He wasn't involved and he couldn't be blamed for what happened to Cardin" asked Ruby.

"Because he is our leader" said Pyrrha. "Ultimately it is his responsible to monitor what we do and stop us if we doing something wrong. We have pretty much told Beacon that Jaune is not a good leader."

She sighed in the end but it was Ruby's face that made it all that worse.

The crushed expression on the youngest Huntress in Beacon told more than words as she seemed to realise what she had just did. Under the silver tongue of one Cinder Fall, their team-mate and someone they should be able to trust they did something that was unforgivable for a team.

But was it truly a bad thing that Jaune didn't know what happened?

It was that doubt that was causing problems to Pyrrha right now. She could easily see what Jaune had to endure as punishment if he actually did know what was happening. She didn't doubt that the Headmaster could see through any lies from his students. A man was not entrusted with the futures of Hunters to only be lied to so easily.

"Then was it bad that we didn't get Jaune involved in this? I mean, Jaune wouldn't have ratted us out or anything like that" Ruby looked uncomfortable of this topic though she was ironically the most enthusiastic among them for this plan.

"Cardin Winchester being sent to the hospital is quite an event. You could say the person or people who did this did so out of malice. Such people would be kicked out of Beacon if found" the black-haired woman explained. "And I doubt Jaune would've been able to keep himself or the rest of us being expelled otherwise when questioned. The Headmaster is not stupid but wouldn't punish an innocent."

The three of them paused with the feeling of tension increasing. Pyrrha could tell that Ruby was much more emotional right now and needed help. Help that she couldn't provide.

That and all of them were ready to burst out shouting and that wouldn't help anyone.

"Ruby" she spoke gently. "Why don't you see Yang and hang out with Team RNBY for a while. I don't think Jaune wants visitors right now and... I need to have a talk with Cinder here."

"O-Okay..."

A click was heard as the young girl closed the door and left to the comfort of her sibling and friends. Pyrrha sighed knowing that Ruby was probably going to interpret her refusal to comfort her right now as rejection. She had led enough of a life to tell what people were thinking of her for better or worse.

But now with Ruby gone, she had a chance to get a proper explanation from Cinder.

"You sent Ruby away? I thought she would want to know" Cinder raised a questioning brow with a look that was all but telling 'I know but you don't know' to her face.

There was a good reason why she didn't like Cinder that much and being alone with her only reinforced that fact. Not only was it hard to tell the intent of this woman in front of her, it seemed like she made it a game to confuse her and other people of her true intent. If there was anyone who had the interest of harming Beacon and its students, it would be this person in front of her.

"Please cut the crap Cinder. What did Cardin do to you that pissed you off that much that you wished to physically harm him so much? Was Jaune part of this?"

It made it hard for her to actually properly judge the black-haired woman if there were always two conflicts on what she felt to her. Was she trying to use them or help them? The line seemed to blur quite a bit on this.

And compared to her, her other team-mates, Ruby and Jaune were much easier to read.

"No" Cinder agreed. "But he is involved in a way which is why I made this happen."

It was no mistake that Cinder Fall fanned the discontent against Team CNDL. Before, the other teams tolerated the group of bullies as they made their rounds but when Cinder got involved, there were more looks, talks and glares against them that Pyrrha was surprised that a good portion of the school was against them.

"So what did Cardin do to Jaune? I hadn't happen yet since nothing changed in our team before the boulder" she folded her arms, waiting for an answer.

"Pyrrha have you noticed that Jaune is a lot weaker than a normal Beacon Student? That is lacking in a number of ways that this Academy would have otherwise never allowed in in normal circumstances?"

"Yes but-"

"The fact is that Headmaster Ozpin allows everyone with a transcript to get into Beacon. No matter if they are real or fake" amber eyes looked straight at her. "There are some people who cannot get into Beacon normally otherwise."

"Are you implying-" she started to shout.

"Imply?" Cinder tasted the word as if it disgusted her. "I know for a fact that Jaune Arc is among the dozen people who have entered Beacon through fake transcripts this year alone. But that part isn't that you should be worried about."

"Then what is?" she was still in shock. Jaune had... faked his way into Beacon? That would be something that she would need to get used to. But more than that, why didn't he tell her?

Then it hit her. Of course he wouldn't and he wouldn't now especially how his trust was treated. She wasn't his partner and now she could

barely count as a team-mate. She felt like crying because it seemed that as much as she hated it, Cinder was in prime position to gain Jaune's trust again while she wasn't.

And a part of her thought that this was her plan all along. It certainly felt like it.

"Simple. Cardin through means I don't know eventually found out or simply deduced that Jaune had forged his transcripts. It would be easy to tell, Jaune isn't a good actor and even saying that someone has faked their way into Beacon would get a reaction out of him."

Flicking her hair slightly, Cinder told her, "Cardin was planning on blackmailing Jaune into doing things for him. And he wouldn't have stopped until he got us involved and I have little doubt how much the idiot would want to push before either we snap and kill him or maim him either way."

"So you convinced everyone to throw a giant boulder on him" she deadpanned though inside, she was much more in turmoil.

"You figured that out?" she smirked. "How easy it was to fan out the flames of hate in everyone. It was quite easy when the targets made themselves so dislikeable to begin with. All it takes is a good image and the world can judge on its own."

"But that isn't a good reason to almost cripple a person!"

"Isn't it?" she stared back at her. "Isn't it fine when a person you trust and care about is getting used because of a fool that doesn't know his place, that wishes to take what is important to you and twist it?"

"No" she firmly said. "There are other means aside from what you think people should do Cinder."

"How naïve... but it makes sense as you are the champion of Minstrel. You simply cannot not be a good person to the world even

now. Even when you want to be selfish" she replied slowly as she walked out of the classroom.

"Do you think Jaune can oppose me?"

"I believe Jaune will be able to keep this team together no matter what you say. I trust him that much."

"I see... that we at an impasse. Jaune might become what you think of him with time, but he isn't right now. Well then, I suppose I would have to hunt him down and talk to him. We are partners after all."

Cinder moved to leave and find Jaune. Her instincts, heart and mind told her it was a bad idea to leave her leader with Jaune right now.

Pyrrha didn't stop her. Ruby also needed help.

"Oh, and a little titbit from me for free. Out of the dozen people that actually forged their transcripts into Beacon, only two of them survived Initiation and are on your team. Make what you think about that and the Headmaster's decision to do that."

"That's-"

The door closed and she didn't know what to do. What was right? What was wrong? Killing was bad but was sending people into somewhere you knew was bad right? The more she talked with Cinder Fall, the more Pyrrha's world-view was being crushed and grinded under her heel.

Things seemed to be falling apart and she didn't know what to do? Would they still be a team in the end or strangers among each other? She didn't want that.

First... she needed to patch things up with her partner. Ruby came before Jaune right now... and she didn't want to face him yet.

Ruby heard a knock and she knew what was on the other side.

"Come in Pyrrha" she sighed. She really didn't want to do anything right now but curl into a ball but whatever happened to her, Jaune had a worse. He wasn't even in the room when she left her sister after a calming talk.

God she felt bad for him. And more important, she wasn't sure her friendship with him could last what just happened.

The red-head in uniform sat next to her, on Jaune's bed without a word.

"You should be out there trying to comfort Jaune" she finally said.

"But I am your partner."

Ruby let out a bitter laugh. One that was all too familiar that once came from her uncle. "We both know that you wanted Jaune as your partner to begin with. The fact that you had to settle down with me didn't change that."

"Ruby what I wanted was a person who cared enough to look beneath everything and saw me as a normal person. A normal person with hopes, dreams and needs that are just average" Pyrrha spoke and it was soft and slow.

"Jaune was the first" she admitted. "He didn't know if me as the famous 'invincible girl' but rather just another girl he could talk to. At that moment, I decided to choose him as my partner."

"But Cinder happened."

Her partner whined at the memory that seemed old to them now. "Yes, Cinder got to him first. Became his partner and I feared that I would now end up with someone who would only care for my name, my ability and how they could benefit from me and nothing less."

"Then I found you all" she whispered.

"Yes and instead of Jaune, whom we all became friends with, I found a partner with you. Aside from gushing from how my weapon worked, you were the same as Jaune in that you didn't care who I was before and that I was your friend now" she rubbed her hair but Ruby still held doubts.

Words were just words in the end. A lie was still a lie.

"But... what would've happened if it was you who found Jaune first in the forest or it was me?" she asked.

"Well-" Pyrrha looked surprised before calming down. "If it was me who became Jaune's partner... well things would be a bit different as I would try to get closer to Jaune than you. At the same time Cinder would be your partner."

Ruby couldn't help but to shiver to that. Cinder already hounded Jaune so much because he was her partner... what would've she done to her if they were partners? She didn't want to think about it at all.

"Our relationship would be different but I believe I would be afraid for you like I am right now afraid for Jaune and how Cinder is influencing him" she grimaced. "Make no mistake. I do not hate Cinder but I do not trust her completely. She... rubs me the wrong way in everything she does despite how I enjoy our spars."

"And if I was partnered with Jaune instead?"

"Then I would probably resent you if not hate you not only for taking Jaune away from me but also for leaving me with Cinder" she said bluntly to the point it caused Ruby to flinch away.

"Not to mention Cinder would also resent you since she seemed to have pinned for Jaune like I did as well" she added and suddenly Ruby was glad there was no chance for her to have been partnered with Jaune in initiation.

"In a way, it was for the best that we were partnered" she mused. "But we still have a problem. We just left cheering up Jaune with Cinder."

"We she is his partner. It's the role of a partner to help support each other" she chuckled though Ruby knew she was joking. It didn't mean it was a good joke.

"Are you kidding? Cinder doesn't even know what fun is! Her fun is all twisted and full of tentacles that Jaune might become a bad person if we let her corrupt our leader!" she all but shouted.

"Then we just need to find him" Pyrrha smiled.

"Of course! We can't leave Jaune behind again."

"Was this what you wanted to show me?" Jaune asked not wanting to know why Cinder set up spy-cameras in their room. The less he knew the better if anyone asked.

Chances were, they would believe he was the pervert who was filming and watching his team like one. And no one would suspect Cinder... well mainly because she's a woman and a pretty one to boot.

Not that that aspect of her appearance stopped him from hating her guts right now.

"Aren't you going to thank me?" she asked. She was amused again.

"Of course not" he snorted and saw a flick of surprise in her eyes before it disappeared. "I figured that whatever happened to Cardin was your fault to begin with. This is just you making sure the team doesn't fall apart while trying to get closer to me."

He waved at the screen where he was sure that the bonds between Ruby and Pyrrha were getting strengthened. The same couldn't be

said for him and Cinder.

"Whatever you're planning, stop. I'm not in the mood for the shit you're planning" he added with a glare.

His partner might have had a hand in making him stronger for the better, but she was also the one who caused so many problems in the team. And she was losing his trust quickly.

He was glad that Ruby and Pyrrha made up for whatever reason that was causing an issue (he was the leader, he should know). But at the same time it made him feel a bit sad that things went right without him. It only proved that Cinder was more of a bitch than he ever imagined even if he was salty with her right now.

Without letting Cinder get another word in, Jaune left her with a final comment. His face pressed close to hers.

"Don't hurt the team or we will be having issues on a number of things Cinder."

It might be the only thing he could do for his team but damn was he going to try and protect them as best he can. Even if the threat is a part of the team and his partner.

Still he was pleasantly surprised if Cinder didn't kick his ass after this or that she didn't actually start to kick his ass then.

A/N: Not much to say here... though its more because I'm too damn tired. 8.30 am classes are hell on my concentration. I think I finished the chapter 11 draft yesterday? Yeah, I did. Now I have to rewrite it into something that doesn't suck.

Chapter 9

Disclaimer: I own nothing of RWBY which belongs to Rooster Teeth and the late Monty Owm.

Chapter 9: Where Ruby plays Video Games

"Well... I did not expect Jaune to have the guts to oppose me in any way yet" she mumbled just as the blonde left her.

Her breathes were... surprisingly deep and if she didn't know better, she must have felt something when Jaune's eyes looked at her own and demanded her to submit to him. It was a feeling she didn't often get.

Worse was that she suspected she liked such a *disgusting* feeling.

Despite the fact that she had told Pyrrha that she more or less crippled Cardin Winchester for the time being due to him being a threat to Jaune, it was more due to the fact that the brat had connections thanks to his family's name and was snooping around targets he could bully.

Eventually he would find that Cinder had also faked her transcripts and would try to use her. At that point, even if she had taken care of the issue, the fact that someone had investigated into her origins would still be there. That was a problem.

Then it would be just better to get rid of Cardin as far as possible besides disposing him and putting the blame onto the concern teammate and partner of Jaune Arc. In hindsight, she did not realise what the effects of doing such a thing could do to her team. And wasn't that a painful notion? Cinder Fall having a team.

Emerald and Mercury were both subordinates of hers and she did not consider them equals as teams may imply. However weeks of

interactions with just them seemed to have changed her for the worse. She had plans. Dozens of dozens of them that would eventually let her gain power and make Beacon, Vale fall!

And all of that was being unravelled by the stems because of her.

Jaune was a surprisingly kind yet flawed person that she helped grow and admittedly was getting close to. Pyrrha was someone that could've been a rival in the past that pushed her to her limits. And Ruby was an innocent child that still had that naïve and wishful dreams that almost made her dream for a better future again.

The fact was that a small part of her was fine with the current state of things. To stay in the team, letting the disguise and lies become the truth. To-

She crushed such feelings in her.

"No, I won't let that happen" she growled.

She was Cinder Fall and she was going to be the complete Fall Maiden. She was going to burn down Beacon and Vale alike while fanning the winds of war.

(And yet she was Cinder Fall partner of Jaune Arc whom she lost his trust and team-mates of Pyrrha Nikos and Ruby Rose who no longer believe in her and that hurt)

"Damn it" she slammed a fist to the wall. It cracked slightly.

Out of all things about her, Cinder would not lie to herself. She would lie to others, use them, manipulate them but she would never deny any desires of hers to be false. And the truth was, she was slowly changing into someone she would've spat on as inferior.

Searching her feelings she quickly concluded that thankfully, she still desired power.

However while she still desired the power of the Fall Maiden, her will to serve under a cruel mistress like Salem was quickly disappearing. The reason why she was feeling this way wasn't because she was *that* power-hungry to betray the Master of Grimm but rather because her loyalties were being shifted.

Towards Team JCNr.

"This is a fine mess I got myself into" she sighed. This was a problem and she knew it. It had only been a short amount of time and already the team was working their way into her heart.

More than event that, the option to 'switch sides' was increasingly becoming more and more easier to consider.

But that did not mean that she wanted to go to Ozpin's side. The man was more cunning than people expected and she had no doubts that he would use her to only throw her away just like Salem would for the 'good' of the world.

She was already his enemy by his standard.

"But Jaune... Team JCNr... I may want to be their side" she muttered. While they were in Ozpin's web currently it didn't mean they would always be. She was still their team-mate no matter how strained their trust was right now.

She needed to mend those bridges and she had all the time she needed. It would be easy to do so.

Pyrrha was world famous but would rather not use the influence that came with that fame. She would want a friend or possibly a rival in her. Ruby had potential but was rough in all matters of things and was just still a child no matter how mature she tried to be. She could easily become a sister-figure to the girl.

And Jaune? He was currently too weak but he had the potential to be something great if he ever manages to tap into his full potential.

She could be many things to him. A friend, lover, life-partner...

What was the best way this?

For better or worse, Cinder *cared* for team JCNR and she didn't really know why but rather acted to make sure she wouldn't get hurt by rejection. If there was one thing she had to name she didn't like, rejection would be pretty close to the top of the list.

Her mind raced through simulations of how her team would react several times over with modifications on their actions and variables before she reached one conclusion. She needed to apologise to them.

Before meeting them individually and build back her friendship with them and possibly give something they didn't hate her for.

"I'm a dumb idiot for even considering this kind of plan" she grumbled.

If things didn't go right, she was going to outright seduce all of them. That way there was at least less complaints if she pleased any of them.

But first, she needed to contact Emerald and Mercury if there was any need for a change in their plans. Bringing up her spare scroll, she called.

"*Hello?*" Emerald's voice came through before they both switched to video call. That way, both of them knew the other wasn't being held hostage... well less chance of it at least.

"What's the percentage of dust you have gathered using the White Fang and Torchwick?" Cinder asked.

"*Around 60% of the amount we need for the plan Cinder*" replied Emerald. "*Mercury is off collecting more for the moment. How's Beacon? Have you...*"

"I am perfectly fine where I am" she snapped. After the third time, even she would get tired of people doubting her skills in infiltrating Beacon. "Class is pitifully easy for someone like me and most of my time is taken making connections and keeping my team from exploding from failure."

"Aren't you on the same team as that Mistral Champion and that girl who took out Torchwick? "

"The former likes to take care of my 'leader' to the point she's willing to neglect everything else while the latter is someone who likes to play around too much" she sighed. "Even I am dragged into their antics."

Emerald smiled from the other side of the scroll.

"It looks like you're having fun."

Cinder had the sudden urge to snap something in her hand. Preferably something that was highly flammable as well.

"I'm not here to have *fun* . I'm here for our plans and if there is even a chance that I fail... well I heard that General Ironwood is coming soon to Beacon for the Vlytal Festival. Not to mention *my* mistress..." she warned.

Emerald's face took a complex shape before returning to normal, *"Cinder, are you sure that it's okay for you to... lower yourself to other people? I mean, you're perfect! But I feel like you mellowed out ever since you went to Beacon."*

Had she? Emerald was one of her most trusted subordinates. She made sure that she was. And because of that Cinder trusted her judgement quite a bit over almost everyone else. Even whatever minor bond with Team JCNr was nothing to it.

"Have I? I am not sure but I needed to dumb myself down to make sure that I didn't try to kill anyone the moment I stepped into this

school."

"True but I saw that you smile more often now. And you didn't threaten to burn off Mercury's balls because he annoyed you that one time."

"Enough talk about this. What about the circumstances with the White Fang? Torchwick can be dealt with easy if he ever goes rogue but that group can be dangerous if only due to sheer numbers that they can throw around" she asked.

"The White Fang is more or less under my control. Give them food and shelter and most of them immediately betrayed that Adam fellow. As for the leader, he's under the impression that this 'Blake' person came back before he executed her. That really made the others feel a lot more wearily taking orders from him considering I looped them into the illusion till they buried the 'body'." she explained.

Cinder smiled at the progress. She knew that this Blake was probably the one from Team RNBY but she didn't expect how idiotic the leader of the White Fang was. Well it wasn't like the girl needed to know on how much the White Fang was fracturing.

Still, Emerald's performance wasn't perfect.

"You could've disguised someone else as 'Blake'. It would've doubled as Adam being mentally unstable while killing off a comrade of the White Fang causing more harm to their little gathering" she said.

The tanned girl looked surprised before shivering with a crushed look on her face. Cinder rolled her eyes at how much Emerald seemed to response to her words and sometimes even disappointment.

"My Apologises Cinder. I've failed."

"No you have not. In fact you had succeeded quite well though it was far from perfect. Well the method I told you might have cracked the White Fang into smaller fractions which would've made it more difficult to manage."

The original plan was for using the White Fang to attack Vale to cause more chaos along with Grimm to further more chaos before she would find and extract the power of the Fall Maiden.

So far, she found no reason to change this but those who cannot adapt will simply be buried with the plans of others.

"Make sure you gain the loyalties of some useful ones. You don't need to be the new leader of the White Fang but I would prefer that we have some options in case our plans change" she ordered.

"Understood ."

"Also tell Mercury to get some blackmail on people who have positions in the police."

"Right. Anything else? Your team might be waiting for you" there was a strange bitterness when Emerald asked that. That confirming that no, she didn't have any more orders to give her, Emerald ended the call.

"Was she perhaps jealous? Well, it's not like I can meet her often. Most of the weekends are spent on Jaune" she mused.

"I'm sorry."

Team JCNr tensed at those words. It was not like Cinder saying she was sorry was a bad thing... well Jaune knew that Cinder wasn't the type to *ever* apologise for her actions. Sure she would acknowledge any mistakes but never apologise for them.

Therefore, all of this was unexpected.

More than that, from what he could tell from her expression, posture and general mood, she had just apologised to them and sincerely as well. Did he perhaps fall into some bizarre world?

"Am I... dreaming? Cinder just... apologised for something" Jaune muttered to himself with disbelief clear on his face. He was sure his two other team-mates were the same.

"I... know. I'm scared" Ruby mumbled while curling up as if there was a predator close by. There was something fundamentally wrong about a person like Cinder saying sorry for anything.

"Is it that strange that I wish to get along with everyone?" there was a bitter smile on Cinder's face and... regret? She was regretting what happened to Cardin?

Jaune at this point was openly gaping and Pyrrha and Ruby were similarly shocked and didn't know what to say.

However Cinder looked the same as always if a bit humbled which just looked... unnatural that Jaune was tempted to go over and pat his partner's forehead to see if she was running a fever or check her breath to tell if she was drinking.

In fact he did that.

Neither a fever... nor drunk or taking drugs" he said with a bit of awe. The black-haired woman only rolled her eyes and allowed him to do this with great restraint.

"Are you done yet? Perhaps you wish to pinch yourself to see if this is a dream as well?" she suggested sarcastically.

"No no" Pyrrha waved her hands butting her way into the conversation. "We are just... surprised of this sudden change."

"Change?" Cinder asked. "I haven't changed at all. It's only natural that I properly apologise for any harm that I may have caused to the

team even if it was emotionally. The fact that I didn't consider the repercussion of my actions on the team speaks poorly of me and as such I can only apologise and hope for forgiveness."

"In that case we can still mostly ignore and shun you and you wouldn't care?" he asked.

Cinder flinched. She actually flinched. "Well... I wouldn't be able to stop you from doing that but..."

"This has to be a trick. Some... sick trick to make us let our guards down" Pyrrha got up and started pacing. "Just a mere hour ago you were casually talking about removing Cardin if he bothered you. No matter how you prettied it up by saying it was for Jaune and the team, in the end it was for you that the plan happened."

"Yes and I freely admit that. The fact that it benefited a number of people including the team as a side-effect as just a bonus" she admitted.

Stunned by how little Cinder seemed to be defending herself, the three students didn't know what to do. It was entirely in their right to practically isolate Cinder from their team from now on but at the same time doing so when she was admitting her crimes and sins to them was a pretty big dick move.

"We..." Jaune turned to his other team-mates, "May need some time to digest all of this. You do realise the whole team breaking apart thing and us hating your gut thing all happened in the same day right?"

"Yes" she smiled at him

"Yeah" he ruffled his hair in stress. "It doesn't help if you make things more complicated when you sudden say you're sorry about everything."

"Of course. I already made the mental calculations and apologising is the quickest way to get into best grace again" Cinder explained. For some reason all three team-mates sighed at the same time.

"I really need to sleep on this so... we'll talk about this tomorrow" he nodded. Soon enough, the team got dressed in their pyjama (Jaune changed separately of course) before going to sleep.

He really needed to sleep on this. From the beginning of the morning, till now, it was a roller-coaster of emotions one after another for Jaune. It wasn't like he didn't want to accept Cinder's apology.

But it was rather out of nowhere and he didn't even have 24 hours before she decided things should be fine between them. He wasn't the type to hold a grudge but rather he was still going through how he felt and should feel from today and this didn't help him at all.

Hopefully everyone else would have less complicated emotions on this matter.

The next day wasn't as good as he hoped. Cinder was awake, before any of them but if he had to tell, she probably slept a lot less than him which was surprising, as he was sure that his team slept lightly yesterday.

"Are you ready to make your decision?" she asked and in a way that didn't at all expect any of her emotions aside from 'acceptance'.

"Not yet" he groaned as he got out of bed before he made a spit-back at what he just heard.

He repeated the words in his head before looking at Cinder, as undisturbed by her action as before since she decided to apologise. If there was ever a time to empathise something over and over again, this was it.

Cinder Fall was a prideful person who would never accept any results that she didn't like.

She was a task-manager from hell that would drive the team into insanity if it meant they would perform as well as she expected. As such, there was never a time when she simply looked like she would 'accept' anything. Therefore he must have been dreaming all this time and needed to wake up.

"You're not sleeping" his partner said in a surprisingly gentle tone. It was a lot pleasanter than he ever expected and he suspected he was still dreaming because of that. Cinder was surprisingly pretty when she kept her mouth shut and just looked like a beauty.

She rolled her eyes, "You do realise that you tend to speak your thoughts when you just wake up right?"

A familiar smirk appeared on her face as his eyes widened in horror.

"Though I do appreciate the compliment" she placed her finger on her lip, "But try not to tell Pyrrha and Ruby. They tend to get jealous of me quite easily and you wouldn't want more fighting now because of you right?"

"Of... course not" he said this time and consciously as well. He had no idea what his partner meant by that but he also didn't know what his sisters tended to do or feel most of the time as well.

He chalked it up to 'girl stuff' and set a reminder to ask one of his sisters if he ever bothered to contact his family within the year. He wasn't going to contact them now considering its early in the year and he hadn't proved that he was 'good enough' to be in Beacon yet.

Looking up, the steady movement of the bed above him told that Ruby was still sleep and from across the room (though next to the bunk beds) was Pyrrha's sleeping form as well. Really, it was Cinder whose bed was furthest away from everyone else and that was not recent.

Jaune decided to wait until his team was completely awake before making any decisions. While he was their leader (even in name only), he wasn't going to condemn anyone just by his own personal feelings. He wasn't that smart but he wasn't stupid to think he had that much control over people he only met a few weeks ago.

"So are you going to make a decision yet?"

"Are you going to keep asking me that until I give you the answer you want?" he shot an irritated look at her.

The only thing he got back was a smile.

Tap left, left, square, circle, right, down, circle, circle, circle, circle.

"Nooooooooo-" Ruby's face looked in agony as her classic 'Hero' fighter was stomped down by her 'Evil Villain' fighter that she *had* to use if only for irony.

More than anything else, her enjoyment in seeing the younger girl despair so badly over a mere video game surpassed any enjoyment Cinder had playing the game. It was a bit therapeutic flexing her villain muscles like this.

"Too bad Ruby. You almost had me."

"That's a lie and you know it" she pouted.

The screen with the words 'YOU WIN' as if confirming that she was indeed superior to Ruby in this game that she had just picked up. She smirked at her knowing that the red-cape girl spent hours and many weeks trying to master the art in hopes of beating her older sister in the same game.

Wait... wasn't she supposed to be losing to Ruby to show that she wasn't unbeatable and could be relatable?

Seeing the pouting Ruby, Cinder had the strangest feeling to ruffle her hair while teasing her heavily on things that she found out. Like how she smuggled cookies from the kitchens into their room or that she had taken an interest in the books Blake read.

"Around round?" she suggested seeing the pout was lasting a while.

"Sure!" and almost immediately, Ruby's expression turned into a smile.

A few buttons later and they were back in the game. Cinder took the chance to talk to the younger girl about a couple of things. Gossip was often the best tool to getting into someone's best graces quickly.

"So... Pyrrha had been spending more time with Jaune again" she spoke up.

"Yeah" Ruby absently answered. Her fingers were rapidly punching the buttons on her controller though the game wasn't one to response even if you mash the buttons faster.

"Well I don't think you need to worry about it. I think it's less of a partner issue than her developing a small crush on our leader now."

"... *WHAT?!* "

To Ruby's wide eyes Cinder could only smirk even more. It was amusing to tease her like this. No wonder why Yang did it all the time.

"Jaune's isn't exactly on the best terms with me yet and at the same time Pyrrha suddenly decided to take the time to help him more often personally without us. How else can I see this but Pyrrha staking her claim" she raised an eyebrow.

It wasn't like she cared if the two shackled up. Not at all, it would just complicate the team even more if two of them hooked up and one of them was the leader and not the partner to the other party.

"So Pyrrha wants to hog Jaune?" Ruby put up a questioning look. "I don't get it. I mean Jaune is great and all but I think it's more of a friend thing right now."

"Though at this rate it might develop further" she added.

Ruby bobbed her head in agreement, "Yeah, I can see Pyrrha... hmm... are you sure you don't want to stop her?"

"Why would I do that?"

"I mean if what Pyrrha is doing can be seen as a crush then don't *you* have a crush on Jaune?"

"What?"

Where the hell did that conclusion come from? And more importantly, was she sputtering in denial right now? Yes. Yes she was. Damn, a reaction like that always ended up in misunderstandings.

One Ruby Rose excited her team room in confusion. Well it was more because Cinder was confusing but that still didn't stop her from being confusion. So it was like... hmm... vege-cookies tasting nice.

Yep, that could sum up her situation with her team-mate and sort of friend nicely.

"I wonder why she seems to focus on Jaune so much" she mused.

Ruby liked Jaune but sometimes it was difficult to take care of him. Yes, take care of him. If she had learnt anything about Jaune, he was rather dependable when he needed to be but otherwise was... a bit dependent on others around him for things he didn't know.

From teaching him the small and subtle cues of how a Hunter acted to even helping him train to become stronger, there wasn't much time to develop a deep friendship that she had hoped with her leader

that was sometimes her student. It wasn't the instant 'team is a family' relationship that her dad always talked about but she was seeing it was getting there.

-With Jaune at the centre of it all funnily enough.

Thinking about it carefully with the relationship everyone had with Jaune, Ruby came to a sudden realisation.

"Holy muckins! Jaune is creating a harem... and I'm in it? Am I?" she tilted her head to that.

By definition a harem was made of a person with at least three partners... having two lovers according to Blake was having 'a flower on both arms'. But she didn't like Jaune that way. At least... she didn't think so?

Honestly, Ruby thought that Cinder was overreacting to her partner being alone with Pyrrha. They were *friends*. All of them were friendly friends that help each other. Cinder is the strict one, Pyrrha is the nice one and Jaune is the one who is dependable when they didn't need to take care of him.

So why the talk of relationships beyond that?

Agggh! This is so confusing!

Instead, Ruby thought of the relationship Jaune had with Ren.

Both were admittedly male though both 'confessed' that they had worn dresses before. Both were leaders but had surprising little control over their own teams for their own reasons. Nora was a handful and Cinder was...

Perhaps because of these two things, the two boys were strangely enough close to each other. More surprisingly as she found out a few days ago was that Jaune and Ren were strange people to begin with when it came to talking to girls.

Both had made no reaction other with slight discomfort when more... feminine topics were brought up... which of course led to Yang trying to lead them on.

Even thinking of the topic would cause her to blush but all Jaune did was tilt his head before talking as normal. Her blonde leader was also surprisingly knowledgeable about periods then she ever thought he would be. Although he backed that up by the fact that he had seven sisters and was a bit too used to what girls did than other boys his age it didn't change the fact that she felt it was weird.

Her embarrassment back then didn't exactly help with Yang asking for some good discounts for tampons to use and Jaune actually replying seriously about it. The group laughed at her red-face and while she felt like she wanted to crawl up into a ball and disappear then, she didn't mind the chaos.

Now? None of them were talking and that was a bit bad and super bad in a way.

There were no small-talks, jokes here and there and even the embarrassing things that she rather not hear for another couple of decades.

In the end, it all led back to Cinder.

They could do to the Headmaster about what she did to Cardin and get Cinder expelled. But that would leave Team JCNR a member short and worse Jaune without a partner, someone to protect him like she and Pyrrha did.

Ruby knew Pyrrha would always help her and she would always help her.

But did Jaune know that with Cinder? Of course Ruby knew that she would help Jaune no matter what and so would Pyrrha but the role of being partners fell onto Cinder before anyone else.

Even Team RNBY was split between their partners with Ren and Nora being obviously closer than they were to other people and Yang and Blake being closer to each other than the others. Ruby and Pyrrha were split from Jaune having to be the closest person that Cinder had and vis versa.

It had her frustrated when she thought about it.

Still... seeing Cinder not doing anything mean or remotely questionably bad at all was a disturbing sight. It almost made her wish that the cookie-stealing meanie was back.

Pyrrha ducked as a kick flew above her head and rolled forward making sure she blocked the next three hits with her shield before swinging around to parry another blow before pressing a trigger to extend her weapon as she attacked.

Her attacks were dodged or parried as well and the cycle of attacking and defending at the same time repeated and repeated over and over again with the two fighters. If anything, the red-head learnt that you could tell a person by the way they fought. And even Cinder was exposed in how she fought.

No matter how she made herself seemed submissive, no matter how she talked or moved or even acted, when she fought and truly let go to the fullest, Pyrrha could tell that Cinder really didn't care about what she did to Cardin. That alone should've been a sign that she should reject such a person in her life.

Her eyes widened as the glass sword shattered into pieces as she hit it before Cinder used her blow to retreat back before reforming it into a bow already stringed with three arrows that she knew wouldn't explode but hurt a lot if they actually managed to hit her. Eyes narrowing in determination, the champion leaped forward as her foe fired.

One hit her shield.

Another missed.

The last knocked her weapon out of her hand.

Without another thought, Pyrrha threw her shield at Cinder and back-flipped/leaped to where her weapon was, reaching it at the moment her shield rebounded 'mysteriously' back into her hands. She was currently unbalanced and she knew that Cinder could win if she attacked now.

Sure it would hurt her but-

Cinder was already set up with another arrow to fire at her but strangely enough didn't move long enough that when she did, Pyrrha was already on the move to dodge the arrow with ease.

Three seconds later, her weapon was clashing with the duo sword style that Cinder used as they closely danced around each other while looking as if they were trying to kill each other. There was no hesitation in a spar like this.

A single blow could potentially kill another and the survivor could just say it was an 'accident'. She felt a shiver of fear as she realised that she couldn't use her semblance to potentially avoid a fatal blow with Cinder using glass weapons made from dust and her own semblance from what she told everyone.

Not to mention there was so little metal her foe was wearing that made it difficult for her to 'adjust' slightly to give her a minor advantage each time they moved. Pyrrha wasn't so arrogant that eventually the woman in her eyes right now wouldn't notice what she was doing with her semblance that she had hidden from everyone.

Eventually she managed to get the upper-hand; she had destroyed the glass weapons fast enough that her opponent could not remake him in time for her weapon to slip next to her neck

"Good spar" Cinder closed her eyes before letting out a huff. "I would say you improved but that would be a lie."

"You were a bit... out of it" said Pyrrha. She had noticed that Cinder's strikes were lacking the sharpness that they used to have this time. Perhaps she was holding back and this was the result.

"You could say so. Jaune hadn't been talking to me again" the black-haired woman muttered while checking the level of dust she had left. Ah, that made sense. Cinder was a prideful person and being ignored like that must have hurt her ego more than she showed.

"That sounds counter-productive."

"Not really. He's been talking to me but not talking to me. It's a bit frustrating."

Cinder while... emotionally and morally stunted in many ways was a genius when it came to communication and reading tells from other people before adjusting her own actions. She could probably read Jaune more than anyone could have expected.

"Really. He hasn't been talking that much to me as well" she mused.

"That's quite normal" Cinder retorted. "You have your hands full with Ruby and he has his hands full with the team. I doubt he really has that much time to be personally with anyone with the way we're making him train."

"Still, it's a shame since the previous incident could've been avoided if our bonds as a team as closer."

"Cardin would still be hospitalised one way or another. The fact that Jaune would take it so badly was out of my calculations."

"So you are admitting that you were wrong?" she smirked.

"... Yes."

Cinder had a bad habit of hiding things from people that she didn't want them to know and that she was good at such things. But at certain times, it was easier to read into her emotions.

"I am surprised though" Cinder said after a moment. "I didn't think you would be the one who would open up to me again first considering our..."

"Rivalry? I like to call it a rivalry. Anything else would be wrong since we're not exactly friends but people who see each other a lot" said Pyrrha.

The red-head saw the other taste the word on her lips before she smiled in such a way that you could mistake it for a smirk. Really, how was it that it was she who was currently on best terms with Cinder?

She was angry not at Cinder for doing such a thing but rather how it affected the team because of said actions. Was it because she was already half-expecting something like with what happened to Cardin to happen or was it because she was already on bad terms with her that there was no way but up with their relationship?

Pyrrha didn't know but she found that she didn't care much about what Cinder did or intended to do. She was a rival and that was all she needed to know.

Really, the night sleep was really good at sorting out emotions.

Ruby woke up the next day hearing a feminine scream. At once, her body reacted and she reached out for Crescent Rose but the next words following the scream only made her sigh.

"CINDER WHERE ARE YOUR CLOTHES?!"

She girl groaned knowing that Cinder definitely planned this out. Modesty was something she would easily throw away if it meant one

of her plans working.

"My my Jaune, barging in when I was taking a bath."

Cinder was definitely having too much fun teasing Jaune in Ruby's opinion. Not to mention she was sure that Yang was listening into the conversation for teasing materials later. She sighed.

Jaune needed to learn not to give any ammo for her sister to use against him.

"What bath?! You're standing there half-naked! Stop stripping!"

"Silly Jaune. I need to take off my clothes to take a bath. Would you like to join me?"

"NO!"

A crash was heard from all the way she was now sitting and the young Huntress wondered if they needed replace a couple of things her leader broke while tripping. A moment later, the blonde exited the bathroom with a strange grin on his face.

She knew that kind of face.

"Pervert" was all she muttered before lying back on her bed and trying to get some sleep.

A/N: This got a rewrite so please excuse some parts that didn't click together perfectly. Also, how many people think Cinder knows the concept of shame and modesty? I certainly don't.

Finished revising chapter 11... now to write the epilogue.

Chapter 10

Disclaimer: I own nothing of RWBY which belongs to Rooster Teeth and the late Monty Owm.

Chapter 10: Where Ruby has a Minor Role

A week passed. A week passed since Cardin Winchester was hospitalised. A week passed since Jaune Arc was 'punished' with supplementary lessons on leadership and how to manage his team. A week passed since he found out that his team was involved in said incident.

A week passed since Cinder Fall *apologised* for her unsaid actions. A week passed since Cinder pretty much changed to the point that it almost seemed like she was getting along with the team. Jaune didn't mind it, he wasn't the type to hold grudges to begin with and Ruby accepted it as well being the same kind of person as her leader.

"Am I the only one to find it strange that Cinder is getting on *too* well with the team?" asked Pyrrha.

But there was one person that really hadn't accepted the woman all this time. Sure they shared a room, sparred against each other and even managed to work together but Pyrrha Nikos still held her dislike of Cinder.

Jaune grunted as he blocked another one of her blows before retreating back more and more so he wouldn't get his ass kicked as quickly as usual.

"Pretty much" he said. "I've been Cinder go over to Team RNBY's place to play some games with Ruby, Yang and Nora. I really pity Ren at those moments."

"She did?" Pyrrha paused in surprise and he took the opportunity to attack her. Sure he wasn't the *best* fighter around with unmatched power, speed or skill but he made sure he was a decent fight at least.

Of course, Pyrrha being as skilled as she is didn't slow down at all at blocking and counter-attacking his attacks with ease before disarming him just as easily. Not minding the end of the spar, Jaune continued to speak with his team-mate.

"Yeah I was invited a couple of times and my partner really mellowed out when it came to anything involving Ruby" he said before pondering in thought. "It looked like she was becoming be childish... or rather acting more like her age with her."

"I see, so Ruby has a good effect on her" Pyrrha smiled.

Jaune had a feeling that she was praising her partner in her head rather than anything else. Taking a moment into consideration he shrugged thinking that it wasn't his job to change the opinions of his team-mates.

"And in a way Cinder had been good for Ruby" he added. "She's a lot more focused on her studies and training for one. And I don't need to worry that she would charge into a horde of Grimm with her only plan being 'slice them all up' anymore."

The red-head blushed hearing that. It had been a previous training exercise to get him used to fighting Grimm that the team had encountered a large number of Grimm. Naturally, Ruby was the one who attacked first and ended up needing to be saved when more and more Grimm came out.

He never let the tiny girl forget that. And he made sure to tell Yang as well.

"That..." Pyrrha furrowed her face in trying to think of an excuse for Ruby but couldn't. "Well you make a good point. But thinking that

Cinder had a good effect on her..."

"She wasn't exactly the best at friending people without outright manipulating them you mean?"

"Pretty much" she sighed. "At this point I don't think she even has any true friends-well those who would call her a friend no matter what aside from you and Ruby. And that may be due to your personalities than anything else."

"I'm not the kind of guy that holds a grudge for long. Sure Cardin was a mean bully but in the end he turned out alright, if a bit scared of me for some reason. I really needed a day for me to forgive Cinder in the end" Jaune smiled.

"You mean the fact that Cinder flashed you?" Pyrrha smiled back at him but it was strangely... frightening.

"Eh?"

Jaune was wondering how the hell she knew that. He knew for a fact that the red-head took a morning run and wasn't in the room with them when that all happened.

"Ruby told me" she answered the unasked question. "She was in the room and woke up after you screamed. A few moments later you came out looking quite pleased with yourself."

He could feel a groan coming. He was *not* a pervert... just a teenager which admittedly was the same thing as being a pervert.

"Strangely enough, your attitude towards her went from frosty to slightly warm" there was a strange glint in her eyes that made him rapidly back away. Jaune felt that if he was too close to her right now, he would be harmed in a bad way.

"There was no real reason for that!" he argued.

But it seemed his words didn't reach her as a sweeping blow knocked him off his feet. He grunted feeling his arm numbing where he had blocked with his shield. He had forgotten a bit, the fact that Pyrrha was *strong* in a physical sense along with being fast and skilful.

Eyes glaring down at him, the blonde felt a shiver that he might lose something important soon if he didn't do anything.

"Pyrrha wait! Have mercy on me!" he cried.

Pyrrha ignored him as she went for her weapon that transformed into its javelin form before a *blur* of red impaled it in between his legs. Jaune had a feeling that he had pee a bit seeing how closer she was to hitting that place.

Looking up, he had expected the face of a wrathful woman but-

"Pu... haahahahahaaaa!"

-Saw the sight of his team-mate's shoulders shaking while she laughed at him. Strangely enough, the sound of her laughter reduced all the bad feelings he started to have against her disappear in an instant.

More than that, a part of him sighed in relief that she wasn't his enemy.

He could deal with Ruby who he treated like a younger sister. He could even deal with Cinder by threatening her which was surprisingly effective (though her training becomes vicious when he does do that). But he never really had to deal with Pyrrha before.

She was so... selfless when it came to things *other* than Cinder. Jaune wasn't sure on how the red-head saw the interactions of their partners as but as the leader of the team he was pretty sure that Cinder brought out the worse in the champion. And that was a good thing.

In a way he was 'lucky' that he had a selfish partner compared to Ruby who had a 'selfless' one. The blonde knew that he could always count on Cinder to do whatever it took to make sure she got out on top even if it meant trampling over other people. Pyrrha was the opposite of that and he didn't envy Ruby when it ever came for Pyrrha to decide over herself or other people.

"Did you really think I would attack you like that?" she grinned.

He glared at her, "Of course I did. I didn't think you were the type to make pranks like that. *Distasteful* pranks as well."

"Is it bad for me to have a sense of humour?"

Jaune stared at her for a moment-actually, several moments before actually groaning this time, "Damn it, you've gained Cinder's sense of humour. I should've seen this coming."

"Wait, what?!" the red-head looked startled before grabbing him by the collar. "What do you mean I gained Cinder's sense of humour? I have not been influenced by *her* at all!"

"Then why do you like beating me down whenever I somehow make you mad?" he asked trying to push down the urge to vomit from all the shaking.

Pyrrha paused in her shaking before avoiding his gaze, "Well... when I think about you getting along with another wo-person I get this tingling feeling to *hurt* you for some reason? And the only person that I really know that actually does that to you is..."

For some reason the prospect of Pyrrha's... tingling feeling was much *much* more frightening than the fact that Cinder was a general sadist when it came to punishing people including him. For some reason he had a feeling that this red-head was much more dangerous than Cinder.

Unfortunately she still had him trapped in reach and he couldn't run away, or say something bad to her. Not to mention she seemed to have instinctively nested her knee into his stomach and was starting to grind him using said knee.

"Yep definitely Cinder's influence there. I bet that you would use your feet like her if you were standing over me instead of being so close" he grunted. It was painful but he was used to pain at this point.

Seeing the position they were in, Pyrrha's face turned red before leaping away in a hurry. Of course, she managed to accidentally kick him in the process. He let another grunt out due to that but didn't really mind.

... Was he becoming a masochist? Hopefully not, though not something that surprising considering Cinder...

Yeah he needed to work more on his authorities act around his partner. She seemed strangely cooperative whenever he temporary acted like.

"Moving the conversation back to something less awkward" he started to say while his team-mate was struggling to apologise to him as well, "How is Cinder with you? I mean I know she's getting along fine with Ruby but I want to know more about you."

"So-so" she managed to shrug after calming down a bit.

"Instead of friends, we more like... rivals I guess? Maybe sparring partners since Miss Goodwitch always seem to pair us together. Those times are always interesting since I rarely fight against Dust users on her level" she explained.

"Doesn't she usually make those swords or her bow when she spars with you? I don't see how that's part of her Dust abilities."

"Apparently really skilled Dust users can specialise in certain dust usage. Cinder seemed to have went towards the path to use dust to

temporary create weapons" she suggested.

"It's probably a semblance thing but Cinder has a lot of control of *fire*. Think of Yang with her semblance letting her go up in flames and think about what someone with the ability to control fire to a high degree can do. Well, that's my theory on how she can create those weapons. They feel like *glass* when I hit them" she added.

"... Somehow I'm not surprise that Cinder was using glass weapons to fight you."

"That seems the norm to someone as strange as your partner. She went from being a mysterious powerful possible threat to someone I could honestly befriend only because she is *somehow* worse than me in making friends."

"You mean that she become normal to you?"

"No... not normal" she shook her head. "She's a bit like me in the end and I don't really like the comparison."

Jaune raised an eyebrow before saying, "So you're worried that people see you as strange? Don't worry too much about that, both of you are normal as far as I'm concern."

Seeing the red-head look at him he continued, "Both of you have things you like, things you dislike and can be nice or evil when you both feel like it. That's pretty much normal to me in the end."

"You think I'm *normal*?" she whispered. The strange glint came back to her eyes and Jaune instinctively felt that that was the wrong thing to say. Seeing her grip her weapon more lovingly by the moment he decided to bolt.

"*Anyway*, I think I have a report to write up for tomorrow. Nice sparring with you Pyrrha!"

He ran away.

If he stayed and looked for a few moments more he would've been the red flushed face of Pyrrha who was strangely turned on by the proclamation of his. It was too bad he didn't. If he did, his life would've been a lot simpler and filled with less danger than if he didn't.

Cinder had a sense that *something* had happened. Of course, with her mind she could tell that whatever happened had reinforced the little crush the red-head towards her partner. Pitiful as she could tell that Jaune was quite dense when it came to matters of romance like all boys his age.

Well most, she preferred to not think of Mercury when it came to teenage romance. Sometimes it looked as if her subordinates' rants to each other were flirting. At those times, she took a long sleep as delusions were bad for the mind.

"So what did my idiot partner say to you?" she asked before seeing her face. "You look happy."

Pyrrha touched her cheek and noted, "Yes, yes I am. Jaune told me something that I had been hoping for-no he simply reconfirmed why I wanted him to be my partner to begin with."

"You do realise that Jaune is *my* partner right?" Cinder's eyebrow arched.

If she was irritated, the red-head didn't show it, "Yes I know. Back then I thought you were a thieving bitch but at the same time was a bit glad that Ruby didn't fall under your hands."

"And now?" she was a bit curious on her opinion on her.

"You're a lying bitch with an agenda but I guess I can leave the safety of Ruby in your hands once in a while."

"You're... a lot more blunt with your words when no one else is with us" Cinder muttered. The fact that someone so famous could even

say those words was surprising as media attention practically moulded them to be at least, polite to everyone by instinct.

"I can be more like what I actually think when it comes to the team" Pyrrha shrugged, "It's just that I don't like you and I can show you how I feel about you like this. I'm perfectly polite when it comes to Jaune and Ruby though."

"Nice for me to have this... pleasure" she replied.

Perhaps she was wrong about the champion. When she saw her the first time, the first thing that popped up in her mind was that she was surprisingly easy to manipulate due to the sheer fact she was the stable 'hero' personality where they are completely selfless and therefore easily used by others.

Now? While Pyrrha was still that frustrating level of selflessness that simply irritated her from time to time, it was mixed with a spice known as selfishness. For some reason, this made her happy.

At least she would be more interesting to rile up, she thought.

"Anyway" she moved to a different topic. If she didn't they would be talking about *Jaune* for far longer than she would've liked. She was already thinking too much of him. "Have you heard about the *dance*?"

"Wasn't an older team dealing with the preparations?"

"Not currently. Apparently that team just got a new mission so Ruby and Yang suggested that they would deal with the preparations for them" she replied. "Which means Team JCNR and Team RNBY will be together in dealing with this."

"Huh..." Pyrrha elegantly answered.

"I was surprised as well when Yang told me that Ruby set up the arrangement" she shrugged. "However, both our teams are now

responsible for the dance event which doesn't actually do us or rather Jaune much favours. We may need to step down our training for him to act 'leader-like' with Ren."

"I highly doubt Jaune and Ren are the types of... people to know how to decorate for a dance" said Pyrrha cautiously.

Cinder laughed to that, "Of course, they are *men* after all. The most they would have to do to prepare for the dance is to buy and wear a close enough fitting tuxedo that would at most take them *minutes* . We have to arrange to order our dresses."

"Dresses" Pyrrha mumbled before asking, "How long do we have until this dance exactly?"

"Around a month. That should be enough time to get dresses for everyone and maybe a spare or two if... *accidents* happen."

"Are you implying something?"

"No no, not at all" she waved her hands. " *Why* would you think that / -oh, of course. My apologies again. I did not mean to imply that Pyrrha. It's just that I prefer to have a back-up or two just in case *something* does happen so we don't need to rush to get a new dress or replace one."

"That makes sense. And I'm thinking that we get our dresses the same time as Ruby and the others? I doubt that Yang wouldn't let the opportunity to dress up her sister pass" Pyrrha chuckled.

"Well it would be *interesting* to see Ruby's jealous gaze" Cinder mused. "We are after all more *developed* than her on contrary to the difference in our ages. Although I doubt that even two years later she would be *that* developed."

Cinder looked in amusement as Pyrrha blushed to her words and remembered that despite her fame and skill in dealing with crowds

with an exceptionally well-crafted fake smile, she was as innocent as Ruby when it came to certain matters.

And surprisingly enough love and dating.

The black-haired woman could tell that Jaune was digging his presence in their team-mates hearts. The fact that Jaune managed to do this unconsciously made her snicker as it was align to some of the 'plot' of Blake's books.

"A-Anyway" Pyrrha stuttered, "Have you told Jaune about this yet?"

"Not yet. I just got out of the conversation with Yang who told me about this. That and I was about to count on you to relay the message to Jaune until you mentioned something about Jaune forgiving me and all" she replied.

"Ah, I guess we can tell him together?" the red-head said hopefully.

"Sure" she agreed easily enough. One of the best things that happened due to the incident with Cardin and dealing with him was that Pyrrha remarkably was opening up more towards her.

And for her plans... whether they would change or not, being on good terms with someone so skilled and known to the world was only a good thing. Heck, she might as well do a favour for the red-head when it came to her romance prospects.

"Pyrrha... how would you like to seduce Jaune?" she whispered the sweet offer in the other girl's ear.

"Our dresses are ordered and fitted to *perfection*, the dance preparation are more or less complete, what are we missing?" Cinder asked the rhetorical question to the rest of her female team-mates.

"Free cookies are the dance-"

"A *date* " she stated over Ruby's voice. Looking over to Pyrrha she asked, "Has anyone asked you out?"

"No and I think I know the reason why" Pyrrha sighed. Cinder didn't have much pity for the girl. Her fame, reputation and attitude were getting into the way of someone asking her out. The same could be said for her... and for Ruby as well.

Not to mention that the only person Pyrrha *would* ask or want to be asked out by is Jaune and Cinder had mixed feelings about that. Jaune was *hers* for good reason. *Months* of work have been made into moulding him from a blubbering fool to someone she can actually take seriously.

"Yang scares all the boys away" Ruby on the other hand whined about her inability to get a date. That was more understandable, if people weren't scared of Yang then they were scared of dating someone so apparently younger in appearance, age and mentality.

Of course, *she* didn't have a date either but she might have one soon and so would the rest of her team.

"In that case we have no dates and will be forced to go to the dance with Jaune as a *team* . Quite boring don't you think?" a smirk came on her face at that exact moment.

The pair of partners knowing her as much as they did, they gave her questioning looks before they were turned into looks of shock and awe to her plan.

Jaune wouldn't know what hit him.

The month towards the dance that seemed to be on everyone's lips seemed to pass by in a blur. Preparations for the dance were made and combined with all the things Jaune usually did, there wasn't much room for any kind of entertainment (he sometimes manages to slip away to read a couple comics now and then).

Of course the usual problems of getting stronger as soon as possible and making sure to keep his ruse that he entered Beacon with legitimate means secrets continued to push him forward *far* more than his distance dreams of being a Hero, a Huntsman.

"Damn damn damn. *Why* is there even a choice for people going to the dance together" he mumbled.

He was pacing, that was never a good sign. Ren was currently being dragged around my Nora so he couldn't come to the other boy for advice and he didn't dare speak to one of the girls for advice.

He needed a *date* .

No no no, having a date isn't a requirement for the dance but for Jaune... team-mate of three *females*, yeah chances are, people are going to misinterpret a team-outing as a group date. Something he *really* doesn't want to happen. It's not like his team-mates weren't pretty, in fact it's the opposite but rather because he did *not* need another rumour lumped on him.

Considering the current one are that he is parasiting off his team, a useless person *and* being the cause of Cardin being hospitalised that one time, having 'dating his team' wouldn't be a good thing. And that wasn't adding on what Yang would do to him if she found out he was 'dating' her sister.

The other blonde had a violent streak beyond a mile and frankly only her sister and her hair triggered it.

That is *exactly* why he was going to ask his team to go to the dance as a *team* . Between having another rumour to his name or having Yang hunt after him, it was obvious which one he would prefer.

"Hey Cinder-" he started to say seeing his partner.

" *Jaune* " Cinder seemed to make the expression 'taste the word' real before demanding, "You will be my dance partner tomorrow.

Make sure to look good."

His mind froze. Cinder asked him *what?!*

"Huh? Wait-" he stuttered out before Cinder gave him a peck to the cheek before leaving.

Face red, Jaune touched where he was kissed before muttering, "What was that about..."

The next moment the door opened and Pyrrha passed by before he called out, "Hey Pyrrha!"

"Yes Jaune?" she asked. There was this... *off* feeling about her but he ignored that for now. There was more important things to do like making sure his team went to the dance as a *team* .

"So for the dance, you wanna go with me-"

"Sure!" the red-head excitedly and quickly replied before racing off giggling.

"-and the rest of the... team."

That was two people thinking they're doing on a date with him to the dance and not as team-mates...

Consequentially he encountered Ruby when he was heading to the library to borrow some reference texts. For some reason she was looking down and *depressed* . Gulping, he went to immediately help her because *Yang* .

"Ruby what's wrong?" he asked, half-concern over her and half-scared about her sister being around to see such a Ruby in his presences.

"Oh hey Jaune" she muttered without the usual enthusiasm. "Just wondering what to do at the dance."

"Aren't you going there with us, your sister and her team?"

"Yeah but..." she let out another sigh, "I kind of want to go there to have something *special* . At this rate it might as well be the usual and the usual is not exactly what I want for the school dance."

He hummed in agreement yet not getting what she was getting to. Girls were *confusing* sometimes even if you knew them well.

"Well I was proposing that the team went together for the dance. You know for fun but..." he looked conflicted this might be just the 'usual' that Ruby mentioned and he didn't want her sad.

"How about a team *date* ?" her eyes seemed to light up. "You, me, Pyrrha and Cinder all dancing together!"

"Yeah... sure" Jaune agreed easily enough. That wasn't that different from what he was proposing in the end.

Ruby cheered before hugging him and running off. Looking around, there were some strange looks directed to him but he shrugged it off. No point thinking about it now, he might ask Cinder later what all of this meant.

She was surprisingly good at telling the intentions of people around them.

Of course the difficulty was asking her without revealing that her 'date' was a 'team date' and everything that meant with Pyrrha also thinking it's a 'date'.

A/N: This chapter tormented me, for the sole fact that I actually rewrote the whole thing to make it less serious. For that, I turned the serious talks Pyrrha had with both team-mates into something that takes itself less seriously.

Chapter 11

Disclaimer: I own nothing of RWBY which belongs to Rooster Teeth and the late Monty Owm.

Chapter 11: Where there are no actual Dance Scenes

There was only an hour before the dance he had not managed to get in contact with his team for the *entire* time since the misunderstandings happened. Jaune was nervous, no that was a damn *understatement* . What the hell would his team sans Ruby think about him taking them *all* to the dance?

Cinder would fry his body... Pyrrha would do something unspeakable with him her weapons. He was sure about that outcome as far as he is sure that they were under the misunderstanding that he somehow had the nerve to ask them out.

Even compared to Ruby (who was far too young for his tastes), the rest of his team-mates were stunningly beautiful women. And with the dance, they would probably dress up and put on make-up that would only enhance their beauty.

He was not looking forward to seeing and being stunned by them. The teasing that he would get...

"Ready for your dates?" asked Ren. They were waiting together for their teams mainly because they were the only guys between the two teams.

"Do you have to say it *that* way? There is no date. This is just another team outing. Nothing more!" he hissed.

The Asian male chuckled, "Keep saying that to yourself. Who do you think you went for advice yesterday?"

"And some help you were" he glared.

"It's not my fault that you somehow managed to get dates from your team-mates the day before the dance. If you didn't then you would've had time to clear up the misunderstanding."

"Yeah..." Jaune rubbed his forehead. He was just not looking forward to it. More surprisingly however was that no one actually managed to get the nerve to ask Cinder or Pyrrha. I mean, *Ruby* it was understandable considering the threat of Yang but the other two?

Cinder was beautiful in a seductive way while Pyrrha was equally pretty in an ironically untouchable way. Either no one actually asked them out or they had rejected everyone that asked him. He didn't know. And in fact, he preferred not to find out.

"They're here" said Ren suddenly.

Jaune snapped his neck to where his team was and as he expected as *stunned*. Remarkably, Cinder and Pyrrha were wearing similar dresses but in the colour of their hairs respectively. Sleeveless arms and was long down as a dress. Naturally Cinder decided to be more provocative with slits to her legs while showing more skin while Pyrrha was more conservative.

"Jaune!" another more childish voice snapped him out of his trance. He saw Ruby run up to him before giving him a twirl of her dress that in Jaune's opinion mixed childish needs and a mature look.

"How do we look?" she asked.

He thought about it for a moment before deciding on a 'safe' answer.

"Very pretty all of you" he complimented before glancing at Cinder again. "Though I *wish* Cinder would dress in something less... eye-catching for my sanity. I'm already getting enough glares from the guys as it is."

Cinder and Ruby giggled and he found it surprising that Cinder could giggle. She certainly was more guarded with her emotions at the beginning of the semester. Now, it looked like Ruby somehow managed to make a *crack*, enough for his partner to relax a bit.

"Figures that the only one you single out is your partner" Pyrrha joked.

"Oh but I can *easily* talk about how lavish you look in your dress Pyrrha" he purred out. It had been a while but it looked like it was time to flex the old *Arc Charm* a bit.

A gloved hand from Cinder held onto Pyrrha's shoulder as she agreed with him. "Yes, I can *certainly* see that. Why don't we all go into a private room and-"

"Ahh!" the red-head screamed momentarily before running away in her heels which was admittedly a level slower than her usual speeds. The blonde was more surprised that she could even move that fast in high-heels.

Now that he thought about it, a good portion of Huntresses wore and fought in high-heels. Insane, the lot of them.

"Why do I have a feeling that you're insulting me Jaune?" Amber eyes close in asked. "Do you have anything to tell me?"

"Not at all" he answered. He was not falling for that one ever again. There were simply too many times he thought Cinder was reading his mind when she couldn't which led to her gaining... unfortunate information.

"Like the time you decided to wear some of your sisters' heels and found them impossible to move in?"

" *How the hell do you get this information?!* "

Jaune wanted to scream. Seriously, how did his partner manage to get *years'* worth of blackmail when he made sure to never mention them at all?

"I ask your sisters. They were more than happy to tell me as 'payment' to keep you alive and well for them to shout at you when you decide to go home" she smiled.

Jaune gulped and was thankful that Ruby spoke up, changing the subject.

"So are we all going to the dance with Jaune? I mean he asked everyone to go together right?" she asked.

Cinder raised her eyebrow elegantly.

" *That's* the first I heard of this."

Pyrrha too had the same expression on her face.

"It's funny how you didn't mean to mention *this* to me Jaune. Asking someone for a date to the dance and not mentioning that two other girls will be coming with us?"

Actually, he would prefer for the conversation to go more about his embarrassing past and all. Hell he was willing to talk about the time he tried to swing a sword and somehow managed to trip over, fall over a chair, crash outside the door before the sword hilt knocked him out into sweet mercy unconsciousness.

"Ah-I... Umm-You know ahhh...." He managed to get that much out of his mouth at the moment.

"Jaune! I thought you told them it was a *team* date" Ruby pouted. "Why was *I* the only one who wasn't asked to the dance with you *alone* ?"

He thought he heard Ren break down in a laugh behind him but he had bigger problems.

"Most likely you're a bit *young* for his taste Ruby" Cinder patted the younger girl's shoulder in (fake) sympathy.

"But I drink *lots* of milk!" she cried out. He wasn't sure but he was sure trying not to see if Ruby had tears in her eyes right now. Jaune already felt enough of a jerk. He didn't need more reasons to try and beat himself up.

"There, there. Don't cry Ruby" said Pyrrha. She was a *lot* better at the sympathy things than his partner at least. Or he could read his partner a lot better than the red-head.

Said red-head turned her head at him and shot him the most *vicious* glare he had ever seen from her.

"Right now we need to decide on *how* to *punish* this person who played with the hearts of three maidens" she declared.

Jaune took a step back.

"Of course. I hate those who want to use me and asking three separate people on the *same* date is someone only a scoundrel would do" said Cinder as a flame lit on the palm of her hand.

Having experienced what even a small flame like that could do to a target, Jaune took another three steps back and found himself to the wall. In a panic, he turned to Ren who was pointedly looking away. He would get no help there.

Looking back at the trio that would be his death, he noticed *one* important detail. Ruby was crying.

Team JCNR and Team RNBV were located next to each other.

The girls of Team RNBV were still in their room.

Yang was still in her room.

She would eventually come out to find Ruby crying because of him.

Jaune at that moment wanted to do nothing more than to bolt away from here as fast as possible. His body sweated in *fear* from what his team and Yang could do to him. And it wasn't even his fault! Everyone misunderstood him!

He didn't even have time to explain-

Click.

The next moment the expressions of his team turned *amused* of all things. Jaune had no idea what was happening. The glare from Pyrrha, the look of disgust from Cinder and the tears from Ruby all magically disappeared as if it never happened.

And off to the side he heard giggling and laughing.

"Team RNBY-Yang what with that scroll? What's going on?" Jaune looked startled as he failed to notice the door to the team room next door opened and more importantly, failed to detect he was being spied on.

He looked back at his team that was in the mist of giggling or outright chuckling intently themselves.

"Cinder? Pyrrha? Ruby?" he questioned.

Ruby was the first to answer him, "Don't worry about it Jaune. This was just a little *prank* ."

However as she said that last word, her face froze before she quickly added, "Though this may be taking it a bit far, all of this is *harmless* . No one got hurt! Right everyone?"

"Of course. The only thing that may have gotten hurt is his pride and I'm sure I've beaten all of that out of his body already" said Cinder smoothly.

The blonde looked at Pyrrha next to see what she had to say but she all she did was smile mysteriously at him with far too much

amusement in her eyes to what happened. He turned to look at the other team that seemed to have plotted against him as well.

"Don't worry about it too much. Ruby told Yang and my team-well then *Nora* heard about it and that was when I along with Blake were dragged into this mess as well" explained Ren.

Jaune sighed, "And you couldn't even give me a heads up that this was happening?"

"And ruin Nora's surprise? Never" the other male shook his head in amusement. Off to the side Nora and Yang in particular were chatting with Ruby. Nora was wearing a white and pink dress eerily similar to her combat outfit while Yang was wearing a similar style dress but was completely white instead.

In comparison Blake was wearing possibly the most conservation outfit of everyone. While she certainly had a dress on, in his opinion looked like she was wearing an apron on with a shirt underneath. Of course, her outfit was a *lot* prettier than a waitress would wear but Jaune had a feeling that the black-haired girl didn't want to particularly stand out.

This was in contrast to every single other dress the remaining females around him wore. All of them were made to be eye-catching and flashy.

"Are you eying up Most Belladonna now?" Cinder voice whispered next to him.

"Of course not" he rolled his eyes. He knew if he did then Yang would have double the reason to kick his ass. And that's before he team does it for her. "I'm wondering why... well I can't explain it well."

"You mean how she decided to dress up or rather dress *down* ? Yes, she has some issues but I believe Yang is taking care of it. Don't nose into other teams problems. You already have enough with just us" she advised.

He thought about it before agreeing. There was no point in getting into more drama. At this point Jaune was more than happy to just get stronger to make his dream more real.

"About the date" he said suddenly, "You don't mind if it becomes a *team* date right?"

"Of course not" the usual smirk appeared on his partner's face, "Just know you *will* look like a player after this."

He sighed. He was worried about that.

The dance was fun! Sure there was none of that 'romantic' stuff that *all* the books promised her. No charming princes or princesses to make her night extra-special or even a true date to her name. Heck her year started out pretty strange and only continued to get stranger even if there were some things that in the end didn't come true.

She wasn't a leader of a team.

She didn't go on many adventures.

But she had friends and she was slowly becoming what she dreamt up for so long.

As such, Ruby Rose was quite a happy girl if she could say so herself. It wasn't the 'perfect' dream she had of Beacon but it was quite closer and even more in the most important ways. Of course that didn't stop some of the things she preferred from not happening from happening.

"Hey Yang, how was the dance with Blake?" Ruby asked her sister.

They were standing on the second level of the hall looking down at the other students whom were all still dancing. Off to the distance, she could see an excited Sun taking Blake to the dance. She wondered briefly if they would start dating...

Nah, Sun doesn't look like the type that would get along with Blake's personality.

"Fantastic! Didn't expect her to actually dance with me though. She's a bit awkward like that. A bit similar to you now that I think about it" Yang replied though she looked up in thought to her last comment.

With a grin suddenly plastered onto her face, her sister moved in and whispered, "You think I can get into her pants? We *both* know what kinds of books she reads."

"*Yaaaang* " Ruby moaned.

"What? It's not like she doesn't read girl-on-girl action from time to time" she barked out laughing. She paused then decided it was time to waggle her eyebrows while spilling out things she never wanted to consider before, "Though I haven't actually seen any books on boy-on-boy action... yet."

Unfortunately Ruby's mind of one of a teenage girl even if a good portion of it was filled with weapon related things and then with Huntress related things. And considering there were only two guys she knew in any level....

"Epp..." she squeaked out. What was that? *What was that?!*

Her face was red not only because she was embarrassed at what her *sister* just told her but rather also how embarrassed at how Yang usually acted. It seemed that being away from her in brief burst periods only made it worse.

Then again, being used to Yang's antics meant being exposed enough that she wouldn't react to it anymore.

"Did you just think of Jaune and Ren together? Our team leaders... doing the *nasty* " she teased, leaning close enough that their noses were touching each other.

" *No!* No no no no....no?"

Ruby couldn't help it. She placed her face into her hands and crouched down into her knees. Ren she didn't mind having... *those* images in her mind, sure he was a friend but he wasn't a *close* friend.

Jaune on the other hand...

"I'm not going to be able to look Jaune in the eye for a while" she grumbled. She rubbed her eyes in irritation before blinking at the look Yang was giving her.

"So..." said sister drawled out. "Mind if you can confirm any of the rumours surrounding your team? I mean, *Ren* has a couple of rumours of these big babies being close to him one too many times but all of that pales in comparison to the ones around Jaune."

Much to Ruby's further irritation, Yang squeezed her breasts just showing much more... *developed* she was. She had two cups sizes over her and it better not turn to *three* any time soon.

"What rumours" she managed to get out.

"You know" Yang waved her hand. "Jaune having a *harem* . Cinder being the true evil overlord of the team. Pyrrha having sex with Cinder after every time they fight. Oh and every one of you except Jaune being sadists and having S&M fetishes."

With each 'rumour' Ruby blush went redder and redder.

The sad part was that without seeing all the 'action' close up, it was quite easy to misunderstand what was happening. Every single rumour was *false* but had some ground in truth... somewhere.

"And I bet the '*team date*' thing doesn't help with the harem rumour" she muttered.

Ruby didn't really know where she stood as part of her team. Jaune was the lovable goofy leader that everyone needed to take care of, Cinder was the mysterious slightly-evil shadow leader and Pyrrha was a kind comfort sister-like figure to her when Yang wasn't there.

She was friends with *all* of them but it was a different kind of friendship which each of them.

The one with Jaune was where she was equal to him where they both goofed off together because they were found out. It was fun hanging out with him when they both had the time. Cinder was a mean dictator when it came to their studies.

The one with Pyrrha was similar to her relationship with Yang and not at the same time. Yang was fun-fun embarrassing to the point she didn't know whether they were related or not. Pyrrha was like mixing Yang's caring nature with... Blake.

Yeah like a mix of Yang and Blake together. Someone who cared but someone who really didn't know how to reach out. Ruby nodded to that accurate description before making a mental note to make Pyrrha more open. Well, that is if Jaune doesn't do it for her.

And there was Cinder.

... She didn't know how she managed to befriend Cinder but it was like dealing with that white-hair girl from waaay back except the threats were hidden only to be spun at the worse possible moment. But Ruby was sure she managed to loosen the fun out of her.

Moments later, her thoughts were cut short when Jaune appeared with Pyrrha asking for another round of dance with her.

Oh and Yang as well.

"I wonder where Cinder went. She looked as if she was in a hurry"
Jaune mused.

"Who knows" Pyrrha shrugged. "She's probably about socialising with other teams. She did make a point that one time about how having connections can lead to unsaid assistant in one form or another."

"That's just like her" he sighed.

Standing on the balcony, the (could've been partners) two members of Team JCNR stared at the bright and broken moon of the world. They had danced, together, with their team and with complete strangers one or two times before getting bored. Ruby had headed to where her sister was and Cinder disappeared on her own.

Of course, this Pyrrha in this kind of setting, her mind led to the conclusion that she was probably enacting some scene from a romance novel. She would need to get Blake's advice on some though, as she never had the chance to pick up a habit aside from training.

"The moon sure is bright" she heard Jaune mutter.

"Indeed. It isn't every day that we can just spend time relaxing like this. It's almost like we're on vacation."

He chuckled, "I'm sure she will work me to the ground later on. You better step up your training or else I might surpass you."

"I'm sure I can figure a trick or two to make sure you stay below me" she took the joke in strides. While Jaune was admittedly making rapid progress being slightly above average compared to the class, she expects him to eventually hit a wall in how far he could go soon.

There was so much training could do to help you to fight and there was so much fighting a small group of people can do to help him prepare to fight everyone else. Eventually Pyrrha would expect Cinder to draft in other people to help Jaune get a variety of people to spar against.

"So how do you feel about Beacon?" he asked suddenly, "I now know that you're pretty famous back at your home so..."

Seeing the nervous expression on her leader's face, Pyrrha could not help but to stare at him. That is, before she ended up giggling because of how little he seemed to have changed even after everything.

"Better than I had ever imagined. I was quite alone because of my fame you know. And yet there happened to be a few people who didn't know who I was at all or didn't care" she smiled.

Jaune blushed remembering their first meeting, "Yeah... man I looked like a fool back then."

"You mean besides casually trying to flirt with Weiss Schnee?"

"Who?"

That response only made her smile widen even more. It took a long time but it seemed like she managed to erase the presence of that person who once tried to persuade her into a partnership. Of course, Pyrrha was sure she was a good person inside but that didn't change how she acted like a raging bitch to everyone.

"Hmm, you don't need to worry about that" she said before turning her attention back to the dance.

"Say..." she started to say before pausing. No, she knew that Jaune didn't actually have any feelings for her. There was no time for it to even start to develop and there was the issue of Cinder and even Ruby in her way.

"Do you want to grab Ruby and Yang for another round of dancing?" she asked.

Jaune looked at her in thought before agreeing, "Sure! I was a bit bored with nothing exciting happening."

The next tens of minutes would be some of the happiest memories Pyrrha would have, only to be surpassed by even more important memories years from now on.

Pyrrha would fully admit had her fears when coming to Beacon. Sanctum was a place that was filled with competitive attitude. If you were strong then you were respected but if you were weak than all you would get is disdain. And in that place she rose to the top. No, she role to the summit where she matched against even her teachers and eventually defeated even them.

But at the same time she was seen as something no one could compare to. How could a person befriend what they fear? She was strong but at the same time she wanted to give mercy to her opponents as much as possible. With her skill, experience and semblance it was so easy to strip down a Hunter into a novice when fighting her.

She did that once.

She never tried ever again.

And while she was famed as the four time winner of the Mistral Regional Tournament, she was also feared as a fighter. Back there, her reputation already became one that made her look like a *monster* that liked crushing her foes. That was something she didn't want at Beacon.

Unlike Sanctum... Beacon was warm.

She had met people who cared about her. People like Ruby who saw beyond the fame and found a friend, people like Cinder who could care less about her reputation and challenged her and people like Jaune who saw her nothing more than a normal person that he could befriend.

Pyrrha was telling the truth to Jaune that Beacon was better than she ever expected. Finding someone like Jaune was like a dream

when she first saw him. Finding Ruby and later Cinder was bonus she never expected. The latter was a bigger surprise because she didn't expect someone so skilled to appear in her life like that.

And her stagnated skills had finally started to move forward again.

Still, if there was one thing that didn't happen that she hoped was any notion of romance. Pyrrha was still a teenage girl no matter how mature she seemed to be in the outside. Jaune was the obvious target with the only other males she knew at her age by name were Ren and Cardin.

She wasn't close to the former and the latter... well life as a single woman would be interesting if that was the case.

Looking back, her small crush on Jaune seemed so shallow. She liked him because he thought of her as a normal person. It was a ridiculous notion to anyone she could tell this to but it was serious for her. For years she was seen as something extraordinary and special and all that did was isolate her from everyone else.

Why would she want someone to treat her as a special person based off her name and achievements? Jaune... was a much better choice for her heart simply because he could come to treat her special because she was *she* and nothing else. But there was a slight problem.

Jaune didn't share her feelings, and if anything the most likely person he would develop feelings to was Cinder. That thought gripped her heart in a way she never experienced before. Jealousy was something she rarely experienced and a first in the romance department.

But even worse was that it seemed that the more she interacted with Jaune the more she fell for him. He was the opposite of her. All those expectations people held for her? She achieved them. Jaune on the other hand failed them. And yet, he still moved forward. Pyrrha didn't know if she was strong enough to do the same if she ever failed.

Failing was frightening to her. She was *invincible* and yet she still lost to Cinder a few times didn't she? That was another thing she had to grudgingly thank the other woman for. That feeling only made her admiration towards Jaune even stronger.

And whether her leader would eventually choose to romance someone like Cinder, Ruby or even someone else, she was fine as long as she had a place in his heart. After all, there was no reason for him to choose some *stranger* as a girlfriend.

Pyrrha had never expected to have the happy ending in her dreams, but anything close was more than enough for her. She was sure that Cinder had made some plans for their leader to fall into her hands. All she had to do was make sure that those plans failed and that Jaune would fall for her.

Even if she had to *share*, Jaune was hers whether he knew it or not.

A giggle slipped out on how she would do that.

Cinder would admit that she was a bit cheerful. After all, one stage of her plans was complete with the virus being implanted without anyone noticing that she had snuck in. She had taken out many of the guards without them seeing her and those who did barely managed to see a blur that knocked them out.

Sure Ozpin and General Ironwood would suspect that she was at play but with so many suspects, would they consider a student at *Beacon* if a student at all? Resourceful and intelligent they may be but they are not omniscience when it came to what happened in every corner of the school.

Still, her infiltration was a good workout and one she needed badly. It was difficult restraining, restraining and *restraining* herself at Beacon to keep her cover. The fact that she broke some bones here and there was really only telling how close she was to snapping.

There would be a mission to clear some Grimm with her team soon but this was just something she needed to indulge in. And so she did. She couldn't use her abilities as freely as she liked though.

Bow and arrow and swords that appear out of nowhere were a big no-no now because that was what Beacon Student Cinder used and no one said she was stupid enough to forget that. Therefore she took a clue from Yang and solely used her body and fists to beat the guards into submission.

Of course, it only took someone of her level a few short minutes at best to plant the virus onto the network before she crept back into the dance without anyone suspecting anything.

"Now all I have to do is wait for the perfect opportunity for the second stage of my plan to start."

And she knew what it was. The Vytal Festival was something that was broadcast internationally once a year via *extensive* technology allowing every Kingdom to see the 'unity' of the world.

But there were still a couple of months until then. Of course, she had other plans to occupy her time. The 'Breach' mission task that she gave Emerald and Mercury to work on together should be coming around nicely by now.

Being no need for them to sneak into Beacon where she was, the pair would have much more time to focus on their tasks and arrange for her plans work out *perfectly* . She expects that much from them. She ran through her plans for a few more minutes while sending a couple of discrete messages to her subordinates to update her on their statuses before Cinder's thoughts inevitably turned to her team.

There was really not much else to think of. Everything else was accounted for.

To say anything of her relationship could be summed up as one word. *Complicated* .

Her relationship with Pyrrha and Ruby were simple enough. The former was admittedly a rival and she had a suspicion that she could be one of the people Ozpin was considering transferring the other half of the power of the Fall Maiden into. She was a skilled foe she doubted even with the incomplete power she had, she would be able to beat her if both of them went all out.

Ironically that was one of the reasons why her outfit suddenly lacked any metal for the red-head to use against her. Even her earrings were converted to plastic and glass as she rather not deal with bloody ears.

Ruby was a pleasant surprise to Cinder. The younger girl was like a puppy in how she wanted to please everyone around her. It looked like she had her own doubts that she could be in Beacon being two years younger than everyone else. In a way, she was the same as Emerald though a younger and much more innocent variant.

Still, she had *silver eyes* and one of the things Salem wanted her to do was keep track of any with that eye colour and report if she couldn't eliminate them. Cinder had a feeling that Ruby would be the key if she ever decided to get away from her mistress's control.

And every day that seemed like a better idea than before .

Finally was her relationship with one Jaune Arc. To say it was complicated was the least of it. They were formally partner and he was her 'leader' at Beacon. Informally she was his teacher, peer, punisher and someone who pushed his everything to the limit. He was...

Well she had no idea what Jaune was to her. That was the *problem* . She fitted everyone else in carefully placed slots, making sure none of them moved away from what she expected but the idiot blonde was the hardest one to pin down. She could just say he was her student, her leader or even her friend but none of them truly fit.

The fact that she felt irritated of the thought of Jaune being with Pyrrha had nothing to do with it.

Nothing at all.

Cinder didn't care what Jaune did or hook up with as long as he didn't interfere with her plans.

Still it wasn't like anything drastic would happen to force her to change her plans.

"This is Lisa Lavender from Vale News Network here for a special report. Today, the illegal terrorist group known as the 'White Fang' have dissolved after massive infighting where the current and disposed leader had lose support from the majority of the Faunas. This as from the reports from the Vale Police from investigations from its members came from the mental instability of the leader of the now defunct White Fang."

"Evidence have that the named leader, Adam Taurus had executed several former members of the group brutally. This was just the beginning of the loss of support as further evidence showed that said leader had planned on opening the tunnel between Vale and Mountain Glenn to invite massive hordes of Grimm into our city via the mass of Dust that had been stolen throughout last year. The criminal Torchwick along with Adam Taurus had been captured by Atlas after information on his whereabouts has been given by former White Fang members."

"The SDC have advocated for the capture and sentencing of all White Fang members former or not to be handed to them for punishment. This has been opposed by many including the Headmaster of Beacon and the Atlas military in an act of unity of the supposed Dust monopoly that the SDC holds over Vale and Atlas. Rumours have it that the influence of the SDC had a hand in the formation of the now defunct terrorist organisation from their actions against the Faunas people in general."

"Here with have a segment of an interview with a former White Fang member."

A clip of a blurred out face appeared on screen.

"It all started peacefully you know. Protest to get our voices heard but then nothing really changed and Adam took charge. At first it was small things like getting food and medicine for our people. Simple basic stuff we need to survive you know."

"But then it he suggested us to ruff up some people. Nothing anything dangerous or anything but those who are really scum-bags of society. Those who treat us real bad. That kind of stuff. I think that was the start of the conditioning he put us through."

"Eventually we went onto to threatening people, stealing valuables and arming ourshelves before we knew it. Some of us left, we called them cowards and traitors back then and hunted them down but they were right in the end. The second in command left a while back. That was when Adam really snapped."

"You heard of the plan to cause this 'breach' right? That was all him and while we knew it was crazy we couldn't refuse. I mean later the second in command was brought back to him and you know what the first thing he did was? Make her beg before cutting her head off. Made us all question him a lot when he continued to execute people left and right."

"I think that was really then we saw what was wrong with him and what he was turning us into. I mean, what kind of sick fuck gets off killing someone once close to them?"

The clip ended and Lisa's face reappeared on the screen.

"In other news-"

Cinder clicked off the news and pinched the hinge of her nose in an attempt to *not* scream, seek out the two *idiots* that ruined all of her

carefully placed plans. The White Fang while disposable were meant to be a major card in weakening Vale.

And more importantly any plans on causing a breach would well and done for. The Kingdom would be well more alert for any kind of sabotage now and she was lucky that there wasn't extra security at the CCTV Tower.

Dozens on dozens of plans were suddenly become useless. It would take *months* for her to sort out anything that could be called a decent plan and by then the best moment of opportunity would be missed and she would need to wait for the next opportunity which might as well take years.

"You know what? I'm going to throw my lot with Jaune for now. It's bound to be better than dealing with this."

A/N: Well I *had* to make sure Cinder had an excuse to not kick-start the end of all things. Well even if Cinder managed to successfully do her evil stuff, the rest of Team JCNr being well... *good* people would probably end up enacting one of those stories where they try and eventually save their 'good' turned evil team-mate.

I find it more hilarious that Emerald and Mercury managed to somehow break up the White Fang into small fractions. Some fics like to portray Cinder as insane maniac with the other two as the sane ones that feel like randomly killing people is bad but don't do anything. Here, Cinder pretty much controls them so they don't screw up. And without her they do screw up. Small but gradually something big happens.

Also. I had some interesting thoughts on how everything changed because of Cinder appearing as a student at Beacon the way I did it. Well relationship wise at least. Cinder took the place of Weiss as someone who 'motivated' Ruby to do better while said youngest girl also get extra support in the form of

Pyrrha. Pyrrha got a rival and actually someone who could push her to her limits. Jaune actually didn't change that much except that his training started a bit earlier.

Oh and Ruby is the connector between the two teams rather than Jaune which has its benefits and drawbacks.

Anyway this is the second-last chapter and the epilogue should be coming tomorrow-looks at unfinished epilogue draft**.**

Cough. Would you all believe me that I had intended on finishing writing this series a *week* ago? Yeah, time really disappears quickly.

I hope I can give a satisfying ending (even though I know that I won't. This series is way too short for that).

Chapter 12

Disclaimer: I own nothing of RWBY which belongs to Rooster Teeth and the late Monty Owm.

Chapter 12 (Epilogue): Where Pyrrha finds Happiness (And where Jaune finds Hell)

Pyrrha Nikos was skipping back to her shared team dorm room. Why wouldn't she? It had all gone right! The mood, the atmosphere and even the confession had all gone right! She was now *dating* Jaune Arc! A giggle slipped through her lips on all the things they would do.

"Would he take me on midnight strolls or a picnic later?" she wondered. Her imagination was on full blast now that she had a chance to do all of those things.

Two years. It had been two years since she had met him and now they were dating. It would've been a fairy tale story if she was *his* partner but beggars cannot choose in this case. She was just so... *happy* that Jaune was in her hands now. Of course she now had a whole different battlefield to stand on.

It was a real shame but the situation with Jaune was something that had long since learnt how to compromise with. Her lovable blonde had been dating *Cinder* for a week before she managed to confess and she could easily admit that her heart was crushed when she heard the news. The shank that stolen Jaune before her- *again* !

But all was fine now that she was also dating him. Oh and Ruby somehow managed to achieve the same after a short argument.

She shook her head at what Ruby got herself into. Pyrrha knew for a fact that her partner had sibling-like feelings towards the blonde. It was more likely that she youngest member of the team didn't want to

be excluded and made a rash decision. Then again, if Ruby was fine with a 'taboo' relation than what did it mean with her relationship with Yang?

The red-head blushed at the imaginary but got her head back on the right tracks.

Right, she was ranting against Cinder before Ruby filled her thoughts.

"I would've thought two years would be enough time for her to learn not to backstab me like that" she grumbled.

To think that she had trusted the bitch on how she was working her way to confess to Jaune. Pyrrha had only realised she had played into the hands of Cinder the moment she heard the news. She had unfortunately let her guard down and suddenly Pyrrha was reduced to the *second* girlfriend of Jaune.

That was a big blow to her morale and it showed when she could barely keep up with Cardin using their spar. Of course, when tried cheering her on she managed to somehow smash the brute into the ground accidentally via her semblance. Well it wasn't like everyone didn't know what her semblance was at this point.

She made quite a showing at her first year Vytal Festival against that android Atlas sent in as one of their students.

"Well then, all I have to do is take his *virginity* to claim first place" she muttered. Everyone knew that that was the prize only second to having a child. Of course *marriage* was now on the table and she had no intentions of letting the blonde go.

-Even if she had to deal with his extra lovers.

While Cinder was certain in Jaune's life (not by her choice) and Ruby was solidifying her position as either another lover or a younger

sister. Then there was Yang and Blake as more candidates that she might need to 'deal' with.

The other blonde was not really a surprise to Pyrrha in that it was only natural for Jaune to attract the attention of other women because of how earnest he was. And it helped that he had filled out more and how other males seemed to be true perverts that Yang didn't particularly like.

As quoted from the woman herself, Jaune was 'refreshing because he didn't stare at her breasts all the time'.

As for Blake, they had a surprising friendship that popped up during their second year. He had been hanging out with Blake more after a few encounters in the library where she helped him search and study certain books. It seemed that they had eventually started to make small talk over a long time before interacting more and more to the point that she now regularly spars with him.

If Pyrrha was concern before, she wasn't now. As Jaune's girlfriend, she didn't care what he did with other girls as long as she had a significant place in his heart. Meaning as long as things stayed the same she wouldn't need to yank someone to a ditch. Then again, she had a feeling that Cinder had conditioned her to be fine with 'sharing'.

Besides her obvious milestone with Jaune, there had been a couple other changes to her status at Beacon.

For one, there were a couple of Mistral immigrants that were her 'fans' which was annoying. She still pasted a smile on her face every time she rejected sparring with them. Some people were just arrogant and annoying enough that she didn't want to deal with them. It seemed her lack of presence at Haven made *some* think she was an easy enough target to a quick fame.

Second was that she actually made friends with Team RNBY and some other teams at Beacon. Sure most of them were those who

befriended via Jaune first but it was the principle of things that mattered. But all of that didn't matter compared to the *fact* that she was dating Jaune!

"Hey P-money! You look extremely cheerful. Finally managed to catch Jaune and your way with him?" came the teasing voice of Yang.

"In a matter of speaking, yes " she turned to the blonde woman and smiled.

"Don't worry, you'll-wait what? You actually managed to shack up with Jauny-boy? When did this happen?!" demanded Yang. She walked up to her and started shaking her shoulders in disbelief.

"Just today actually. I confessed and he accepted" she answered not minding the shaking. If you were disturbed by only this level of dizziness then you would probably not fare well in more complicated high speed combat that would be needed later on.

Remembering how he seemed to smile brightly at her while accepting her, a smile couldn't be helped but to appear on her face again.

Of course, there was the added benefit of seeing the shocked face of Yang in front of her. Was it that surprised that she managed to get Jaune in the end?

"Holy-how did you manage to get Cinder's approval?"

To that question a smirk appeared on her face, "Who said I ever got her 'permission'? I wasn't aware that Jaune needed to ask for permission to date anyone. Well I am willing to share him in the end."

"You didn't ask-" all of a sudden Yang's face paled though the red-head saw in reason for that. She was with Jaune after all. There was nothing to be afraid of.

"Oh and Ruby is dating him as well" she off-handily added. Ruby was her sister so it would be better for her to know who she was dating. The fact that it was Jaune only made it clear that Pyrrha could tell her ahead of time.

Yang froze again but this time it was surprisingly deeper than the previous shock. Pyrrha sighed; of course she would be surprised. After all even *she* didn't expect for Ruby to pin after him.

Of course when that shock wore off, the busty blonde's eyes turned into a deep red before her hair started going aflame.

" That bastard is doing WHAT to my sister?! I'm going to kill him!"

Sighing a second time, the red-head prepared for combat. It wouldn't do well if either Jaune or Ruby was hurt by an enraged Yang.

"I'm afraid I cannot let you do that" she warned while using her semblance to rip off a pip from the wall as a make-shift weapon. The hell was strangely empty for a while so at least she had the benefit that no one else would be dragged into this battle.

A smirk that would not be dissimilar to the one Cinder wore all the time appeared on her face seeing one of the few people she could fight seriously charge at her with the intent to hurt.

Ruby Rose on the other hand was trying to hide from the world as much as possible by stuffing herself in pillows and blankets. It was only after returning to the team's room and reading a couple of those romance novels Blake recommended that it dawned on her of what she just did and forced onto Jaune.

"Oh my god I'm so embarrassed" she muttered hugging her pillow deeper into her face. Any more and she would die from a lack of air coming through to her lungs.

That is, if Pyrrha didn't kill her first. She knew that the red-head and her partner had been waiting to confess to Jaune for literal *years* now and she had just made the big event into something that she needed to share. Fortunately she knew that if her partner didn't slay her then, it is likely she would not slay her later.

Of course there were many things her partner could do to her that would make her life... uncomfortable without actually sending her to see her mother early. Ruby shivered at the possibility.

For better... actually only for *worse*, Pyrrha had been picking up some of the bad habits of Cinder.

And speaking of Cinder...

"Would she actually mind if I'm 'dating' Jaune as well?" she wondered. It was really an act of impulse to demand for whatever Pyrrha wanted and what Cinder had with Jaune to apply for her as well.

She didn't know it was for dating him!

After a few more minutes of pitying herself, the sort of black-haired sort of red-head girl popped her head out of the blankets to scroll through her scroll of the recent messages she had gotten.

They were from those her age that were entering Beacon from Signal.

She really didn't know what to think about this or them. She really didn't have many or any friends at Signal. She was the younger sister of the much more social Yang and the daughter of the headmaster there. Those who talked to her either wanted to suck up to her dad or sister or only wanted her expertise on weapons.

"I wonder if I can just avoid them all" she suggested. It wouldn't be too difficult. The course of first-years and third-years were simply too different.

Every other month Team JCNR and the rest of the third-years were sent on missions to subjugate Grimm or do other Hunter related tasks. While at the same time the first years would stay at the Academy for most of the year except for a single mission with a professor around mid-year.

If it was her and if she told everyone that she wished for this, she was sure they would hide her from them all-

No no no no *no no* . She shouldn't think that way. Just because she didn't get along with them before as well as she got along with her friends now didn't mean she needed to go out of her way to avoid them.

She wasn't bitter about being used so many times back then while being talked about behind her back. Not at all.

A knock on the door.

"Come in!" she raised her voice to whoever was on the other side. It was probably someone from her team or Team RNBY. No one else really dared come to either of their rooms after that one time Cardin tried to get back at Cinder and ended up withdrawing from Beacon permanently.

The door opened and a familiar cat-eared faunas appeared looking agitated.

"Ruby, your sister and partner decided it was a *great* idea to start a fight in the middle of the hallway" she warned and stared at the same time. However for some reason she told Blake was starting at her for another reason.

"Eh? Why would they fight?" Ruby looked confused. Why on earth would Yang fight Pyrrha?

"There are only two reasons why Yang would pick a fight-well *three* if you include her mother. That is, her hair or you" she said. "And there

is really only two-make that *one* reason why Pyrrha would pick a fight and that is Jaune."

"Did you or Jaune do something together that would get them both mad at each other?" she asked.

Ruby thought about it and immediately started to deny, deny and *deny* as much as she could.

"Nope. Not at all Blake. Try to... not get in their way. I think everyone knows how much damage everything goes when they fight with the exception of Cinder getting involved" she grimaced at the amount of paperwork Jaune forced the team to help him fill that one time.

She wasn't even involved that time at all!

Said Cat Faunas snorted to that advice, "I think only the first years are ignorant of that fact. And even if they weren't before, they will now. But are you sure you don't know the cause of their fight?"

Amber eyes glared at her with the intent of finding any lies. If this was two years ago and before Cinder, Blake would've seen through her instantly. However Ruby had learnt how to lie and have an almost perfect poker face in order to fool Cinder enough so her cookies wouldn't be taken away.

As such, she expected Blake to believe her innocent of the matter.

"I have nothing to do with what's going on" Ruby waved dismissingly with a sigh, "Yang probably made a bad comment about Jaune and Pyrrha overreacted."

"... I see. And can you explain why my partner's semblance is at full force right now?"

"Pyrrha probably accidentally cut her hair? Like that incident a few months ago" she replied.

This time Blake winced seeing that she was one of the victims of that event. During one of the regular sparring rounds where the top three fighters were Yang, Cinder and Pyrrha, the latter managed to accidentally cut a fair portion of the blonde's hair off.

As someone who could go berserk by having the slightest bit of hair cut through, Yang naturally went more berserk than ever seen before and the one on one sparring match turned into a boss raid where Yang was the fiery dragon that kept on fighting and got stronger no matter what.

Lots of ice dust was used to trap her and Ren went into a coma for a few days overusing his semblance to calm her down.

" *Ruby* " Blake glared at her, "Please calm your sister and partner. I'm sure I can handle Yang on my own but not with Pyrrha around."

Shoulder slumping, Ruby redundantly got out of bed and went to help Blake make sure part of the school wasn't destroyed. Actually, didn't she just *ruin* what was supposed to be one of the happiest moments of her partner's life?

"Actually I think I have something else to do-"

A hand shot out and grabbed onto her cloak. This time Blake was fuming and she wasn't letting go. Without considering to her, the faunas started dragging her no minding that she wasn't moving at all in that direction.

"You're not getting out of this easily."

Ruby sighed. Sometimes she regrets that Team RNBY managed to reveal the rather forceful personality behind the once shy and distant person that she had met before initiation those years ago.

Well considering she had to deal with a combination of Yang and Nora, she wasn't surprised at all that the black-haired beauty

developed a rather forceful personality when it came to troublemakers.

"How is the progress between reforming the White Fang? I care not about their stance but rather if they are behind my cause Emerald" another black-haired beauty said to the other person on her scroll.

The leader of one of the factions that was once the former White Fang, Emerald answered her, *"I managed to regain control of around half the numbers of the former White Fang. However they desire to promote an image similar to the original White Fang. Many of them don't actually want to fight."*

"That's fine. There's more than just causing death and destruction. People will cause all the death and destruction when it involves their livelihood. Watts managed to lecture her on that... well before he was captured and executed" Cinder waved the issue off.

She honestly had nothing to do with that. The man got cocky and Ozpin found out about him and swiftly got him 'removed'.

If the Faunas wanted peace, so be it. For them to gain peace they would need to create bloodshed. Therefore she needed pieces to make sure that they would shed blood in the places she wanted, places that would gradually cause the foundations of the Kingdoms to fall apart that much easier.

That is, if when she decided to enact her plans again.

"What of Mercury?"

"Mercury is dealing with the more violent factions. Under your instructions he had leaked information so decrease attacks from Faunas. This allowed more good-will from the other factions that are under my control" she replied.

"Good good. What about the development of his contacts in the various Underground societies?"

"Decent at best " Emerald replied, "The one in Vale is the most developed but as expected the one in Atlas is almost non-existent to begin with. Well did he did mention something about trying to seduce the Schnee Heir..."

"Remind me to find a replacement for him soon" Cinder rubbed her forehead. There weren't that many memories of Weiss Schnee and most of them led her to have a bad impression on her.

The fact that she failed to get into Beacon and was sent home wouldn't have helped her personality over the years. Not to mention there was that one article where it was reported she was recovering from taking 'recreational' drugs and was suicidal for a while.

Well tablet news were often faked so she held no belief those events actually happened.

"Ah, if that's all Cinder can I get back to my paperwork?"

"Go ahead. Know that I had to deal with it before you and yet I managed to achieve what I had despite that" she said.

"Of course Cinder. I won't let you down."

The call ended and Cinder sighed. It was getting harder to get a grip on the world when she was stuck in Beacon for so long. The weekends and those few days where she was free to do anything were consumed by her team and Jaune.

The latter taking his own category eventually when she realised that her moulding plan was working and she needed a closer hand so Pyrrha's influence would be minimal. If the red-head had it her way, Jaune would be a cushy man who would need to rely on her for everything.

Cinder wouldn't have that. She needed Jaune to be at *least* competent to take charge on his own simply because there was a good possibility that Team JCNR would side with *her* instead of Ozpin if anything happened.

Of course besides making him a decent fighter, she also made sure that Jaune had skills in cooking, housekeeping, financing, gardening and many other areas to make sure he didn't lack in any area. Then again, she only realised she was unconsciously making her partner and leader into a *house-husband* after a year and a half and it was too late to stop then.

She was not going to let someone like Pyrrha Nikos reap away her results that she had cultivated for so long.

Through the Beacon gossip network, she had quickly found out that Pyrrha had confessed to Jaune and he had accepted. That was not surprising to her and on some level acceptable. For now she could tolerate other women with Jaune.

The competition on who would 'own' Jaune would continue between them per usual. Sure she had to share with Pyrrha for now but eventually her partner would choose her in the end and everything would be fine and *perfect* . She was Cinder Fall and she would not lose.

What she didn't expect was Ruby joining in as well. And it was likely she would join force with her rival. This only made things more complicated.

"Knowing Ruby... she probably did this without knowing what she was getting into" she deduced, "The girl has abandonment issues that are only a cut below the one Yang has. I can see her joining in just to not be excluded from what the rest of the team was doing."

Well it wasn't like a third girl joining in would be too bad. Jaune did have the stamina to do stuff with all of them if he wished, that was

basically what his semblance was. Never-ending, ever-lasting almost unlimited stamina as long as he had Aura.

It fitted him more than a semblance to say... block attacks with his Aura more effectively if Pyrrha had anything to say about it. Semblances were a base reflection of the person who uses them combined with a twist of circumstance and desire when it first activates.

A person who desired to hide would get a semblance that would hide them; a person who didn't want to get hurt would get one that would protect them and so on. Really, you could tell a lot of a person by what kind of semblance they had. Ruby didn't want to be left behind, Pyrrha wanted control over everything else and Jaune just wanted to keep on going until the end.

As for her...

Flames raged around her as-

She hated them, all of them-

They will all turn to ash-

They will all fall-

A small flame lit in her palm as she stared in it. This was her semblance. Her fire.

But people weren't defined by only one event in their lives. People weren't defined by their semblance.

The next moment, a notification appeared on her scroll. Opening said message and reading it quickly, Cinder took a moment to stare at the setting sun in hopes that what she read was wrong. A moment turned into two before sighing heavily.

"What the hell are those people doing?" she muttered as she walked towards the ever growing battlefield that started off with just Pyrrha

and Yang. Actually he might as well get to the bottom of this by asking Jaune what happened.

Not to mention what the hell he was thinking of three-timing her with the rest of their team.

Ozpin sipped his coffee and reviewed the reports about the new first years. They certainly had potential but so far the most noticeable things about them were that some of them knew Ruby Rose back when she was still at Signal.

He suspects one or two arrogant ones would eventually challenge her to a spar to prove themselves and find themselves lacking.

"What Miss Rose lacked... was experience. It had been two years since the inexperienced young Huntress came to Beacon" he mused.

Two years was a long time for someone so young and already had the shy child disappeared to be replaced by the confident young woman that holds a fair resemblance to the late Summer Rose. Of course his mind went onto other matters besides the young Miss Rose.

He wasn't obsessed with the girl or her team no matter what anyone else said.

Despite popular theory to his close allies, he did not put everything into the hands of 'fairy-tales' and 'legends'. As potent as the silver eyes may be, it was useless as long as Ruby Rose did not awaken them just like Summer Rose hadn't. Not to mention the power of the 'Four Seasonal Maidens' could be easily stolen away by assassins.

Therefore it was crucial to train up *other* defenders of humanity. Hunters. This was why he was at the position of Headmaster to make sure each generation of Hunters were at least as great as the ones that came before them.

And despite everything the Hunters were losing slowly but surely. Was it that surprising that he went to look into ways of increasing their success without increasing their death toll at the same time?

He believed so.

Still, it was a shame that Miss Nikos denied to become the next Fall Maiden. In terms of skill, personality and character she was the top candidate to become a guardian of humanity. Not to mention she was at close proximity to other characters of interest to him. Miss Rose and Miss Fall.

The former interested him due to the legend of the Silver-Eyed Warriors and the latter was due to how much power she processed. He had a suspicion that she was the 'Queen' he was looking for but he didn't make any moves. She was too close to other essential resources and attacking her might end up killing too many important people for his plans.

But amusingly enough, he might not need to remove or even try to convince her. The young Mr Arc seemed to be doing a good job in slowly worming his way into her heart and seducing her along with the few other close female friends he had.

Amber had soon died a few months later and he did not know whether if the power had transferred to another person including the assailant which took a fragment of the power to begin with or was lost forever.

"Hopefully we can locate Summer, Winter and Spring. Salem isn't going to take the loss of Fall well" he muttered.

The Grimm Overlady was still a problem to Remnant but thankfully now in a sense of being a long-term problem rather one that was about to burst under their feet. With the White fang dissolved and slowly being turned back into several organisations that wishes for equality between the two species, one of the primary method for evil to take root and drag down the Kingdoms have been eliminated.

It was a fortunate change that he had honestly didn't see coming. He had prepared James back then to lend some military support if anything bad could happen though in the end it wasn't needed.

Of course there was also the incident where they had found another pawn of Salem that wasn't the queen. A politician that worked in the shadows who managed to manipulate Mistral and Atlas alike heavily to cause incident after incident. It wasn't surprising that after he was removed the relations between Kingdoms *rapidly* improved.

He shook his head remembering the reports of the damage that a single man caused to the Kingdoms on his own. Not only did the damage go beyond a few billion lien over the period he had been operating but perhaps even a million lives had been destroyed completely by his action. And all because there was a 'weakness' known as self-interest I the upper brass of each Kingdom.

Still, with such a dangerous being no longer operating among them, Ozpin had hopes that they would have enough time to prepare for the next thing Salem would throw at them. He has no doubts that she had other pawns moving around beyond his gaze even now.

His thoughts were interrupted as a 'ding' sound echoed throughout his office. Someone had entered the elevator.

As the Headmaster he had made it quite clear that his office was open to anyone who would want to discuss any problems. However being teenagers not yet adults, most students refused to lower themselves enough to ask for help. It was a constant problem that he had no doubt factored by his position.

Due to this, he often moved around his school in hopes for a problem to run into him.

Nonetheless he was pleased that someone had the mind to actually personally seek him out to talk about a problem. The person that came through was however unexpected.

"Mr Arc-"

" *You have to let me transfer! Get me away from this madness!* " the younger male screamed.

Blinking in surprise, Ozpin resorted to his base instinct and took a sip of coffee all the while listening to the leader of Team JCNr's ranting.

"Oh god, Pyrrha snapped! She and Yang destroyed the west wing of the dormitory already and more people started joining into the fight trying to stop them! They were looking for me to *stop* them. That's insane. How can someone like me even stall them?"

"Now now-"

"Not to mention of what Cinder will do to me! She had been slowly making my training strange. I had to learn how to cook and manage a household out of nowhere! I'm supposed to be training to be a Huntsman not a house-husband! Shit! I actually accepted Pyrrha's confession forgetting about that devil."

"Mr Arc I-"

"Actually Pyrrha might be the one who would kill me in the end. She had become stranger by the year you know. Last week I caught her smelling my used underwear. I was honestly creeped out but didn't want to hurt her feelings and had to fake a smile to assure her that I wasn't mad. I wasn't mad, I was scared as hell!"

"How fascination but-"

"Didn't Ruby say something back then as well?... *SHIT!* Ruby confessed to me and I also accepted her as a girlfriend. Double damn! Yang might find out..."

At this point the Headmaster of Beacon really had enough. Grabbing his cane, he slammed it onto the ground vibrating the place where

the young team leader stood to the point it shook him out of his madness.

Clarity coming back into his eyes, the student started to ask, "Headmaster Ozpin please let me-"

"Mr Arc, might I remind you that I allowed you in Beacon for a reason despite your transcripts? Besides, I have heard much of your... romances with your team" Ozpin wasn't surprised that he would want to run away. Unlike in fantasy and delusions, managing even two women at once was a nightmare let alone a harem.

He always pitied the fools that managed to get themselves stuck in one. They usually ended up with the victim being stabbed due to poor management of relations or suicide from all the stress and constant fear that heightens every once a month.

"Yes-but! I'm going to seriously die! Cinder is a sadist, Pyrrha is a Yandere and while Ruby won't kill me, Yang will!" said Jaune with clear desperation in his eyes... face and everywhere else.

"I don't see how that's my problem" he really didn't. A few more similar exchanges and the young man eventually gave up.

Ozpin huffed. How come the problems that his students end up willingly bring to him are all things related to the mess they made in team relations?

Jaune Arc was a dead man walking. As the elevator went down he was considering his options. Half of them involved running away and he was considering going back to see his family one last time before his team tracked him down.

However all hopes disappeared with the appearance of a single person standing at the exit.

To any onlookers they would see a beautiful woman in her prime waiting with each grace that any males would want to beat up the fool that dared make her wait. Her black hair curled at its end and her legs seemed to go on forever according to some.

To Jaune, she was nothing more than the figure of the devil about to take his soul.

"Jaune Arc. Can you explain how there are rumours you are now dating the WHOLE team?" she asked kindly as a figure of a demon appeared behind her, ready to chop him up into tiny pieces.

He gulped and decided to go for his gut instinct. That is to grovel on the ground as much as possible and hope for forgiveness.

A/N: This is the end...*looks around for people about to demand more chapters* At Last! I have finished a series properly without stopping mid-way due to a lack of motivation. *Starts rubbing sweat off forehead*. This series was an interesting concept when I first thought of it the end of last year. It stayed as a concept before I decided to flesh out some ideas on how it would work where I had finished a working plan on what the beginning to team announcement.

Looking back, that may be the main reason why chapter 6+ seemed to have changed the tone of the story so much. *shrugs* Well I can't do anything about it now and I don't have the motivation to go back and change anything. Anyway my thoughts of this series...

To describe it would be complicated at best. There's not much pride or a sense of accomplishment but rather amusement? Well I did start off my writing hobby with a comedy based series though I since changed to a more serious tone. This can be seen as flexing my rusty writing muscles on humour based writing. And as you can see, it's quite rusty.

Anyway, the basis of this story was less about the action but rather the change in relation of everyone when you replace Weiss with Cinder and mix around the team a bit. Ren and Nora practically got no screen-time aside from initiation and a few comments. And why should they? This is about Team JCNR. Those two and Blake are practically non-existent except in a minor way to the team. I can't see them changing just because they're in different team than Jaune and Pyrrha.

Only Yang gets the cut because she's Ruby's sister. As for everyone else... well to start off easy with Team RNBY, Ren and Nora are pretty much the same. They really hadn't gotten much development until Vol 4 of RWBY. Yang is pretty much the same except she's getting used to not taking care of her little sis all the time.

Blake on the other hand got the better hand compared to when Weiss was there. Without Weiss, she didn't run away from the team because there was no one to place 'judgement' on her. RWBY would've been a much different series if Weiss decided to stay by her initial view of Blake after it was revealed she was a Faunas. Yang would never accept the person who would drive away her partner and Ruby would stick by her sister than the person who she really didn't have any good relation to. Team RWBY would break because one person decided their opinion mattered most. Luckily Team RNBY doesn't have anyone with a negative view of Faunas.

Vol.1 of RWBY can be summed up as the struggles of Jaune and Blake respectively.

As for Team JCNR. Boy their relationship can twist around a lot.

Jaune is pretty much the same goofy, mostly non-serious person but seeks out help on his studies and combat skills more often. But at the same time with Cinder and Ruby added for him to lead, the crushing expectation is increased at the

same time. Stressed simply cannot describe how he feels when compared to the rest of his team.

He sees everyone pretty much as a friend but on different levels. Pyrrha is his dependable friend, Ruby is the friend he goofs around with and Cinder is the strict friend that pushes him forward whether he asks for it or not.

Ruby is no longer a leader and goofs around more. With less responsibility there is less pressure on her to be more mature. However with the 'guidance' of Cinder who really takes over the role of strict-stick that Weiss had, she actually studies and works hard in her own way.

Her relationship with Pyrrha is more similar to the one she has with her sister than the one she has with Jaune. Her view of Cinder is less of a friend but more of a mentor though she still tries to befriend as many people as she can.

Pyrrha actually got the better change here. There are two things that define her the most in RWBY. Her crushing skill at fighting and the isolation from her peers as a result of this that created this not arrogant person you would expect from someone so praised. Cinder's appearance basically ripped down the fact that she was the strongest and Jaune was pretty much her first friend.

While she still has a crush on Jaune, she also has a rivalry with Cinder that balances things out... until that rivalry also turned into a competition for Jaune's heart. Along with Ruby, she has three focuses on her relationship instead of the just one in RWBY. While she was friends with Ren and Nora there, I don't see her relationship with them as important as the one she had with Jaune.

And finally Cinder. There is a reason why this is called Cinder's Mid-life Crisis. Anything thinking that she actually changed at all raise your hands...*starts laughing* No seriously, in a place

where she is stuck within 'enemies' rank for so long, you would eventually start thinking the mask is real. While she has postpone her plans it's not like she's going to stop. She doesn't realise the Fall Maiden had died.

Think of a pet. A puppy. You trained it, raised it, it's *yours* . That's how Cinder thinks of Jaune. She may like him, perhaps love him but her thoughts drive in the fact that Jaune is her possession. As for Pyrrha and Ruby? They are tools to her. Useful ones, ones that she preferred on her sides but tools nonetheless. She may favour them but number 1 in her heart is still herself.

Anyway I think this is enough of a A/N. Uni is picking up and I'm getting less and less time for writing. Now... to think of my next project.

Looks at story stats... starts crying due to how this series easily overtook another story that *months* was spent on