

I don't draw and I'm not British.

Here is the next chapter of ***King of Champions!***

Thanks go to [HP-DG-AP-PN-RG-NR](#) who gave this a look over, and noticed that I once more forgot to replace side characters with their actual names instead of the ones I use while writing with Dragon Naturally Speaking, along with a few other mistakes. I tried to Grammarly a bit, but I really need to remember to Grammarly while I go along, man. It will slow down my day-to-day productivity, but would make the final product better.

Chapter 10: Remembering, Learning and Discovering

Given his chosen profession, Roman had learned long ago not to have a single domicile, let alone a place where he ran his business. Instead, he had several scattered around Vale in very unusual places, only one or two of them actually being in normal-looking buildings or, in point of fact, looking like a home at all. The one he was using currently was a case in point. The house portion was on the second story of a seemingly rickety small restaurant, the kind of hole-in-the-wall place that was known only to the locals. Inside, it looked far, far better than the outside, but even then, you would have to go up to the second story to find Roman's actual office/sleeping quarters, and even then, it looked like a living room with a desk set in the middle and multiple small sofas set all around it rather than an apartment or office.

Roman was sitting at the desk, his jacket laid out on one of the sofas, his shoes by the door. Roman looked completely at ease, his feet propped up on the desk, twirling melodic cudgel in one hand as he held up his scroll in the other, reading several reports when the door banged open. "Torchwick, what the hell are you playing at?! I go away on a mission for the Great Leader and come back only to find our base stripped bare!? Give me one reason why I shouldn't carve your head off your shoulders!"

With a faint sigh, Roman looked up calmly from his scroll, staring at the taller and wider figure of Bonesaw, one of Adam Taurus' chief lieutenants here in Vale. *Such a stupid name. The poor boy, he never grew out of his Chunni phase.*

To one side of the door, one of the other White Fang members waved his hand apologetically towards Roman. That one Roman actually had a lot of time for. Perry was one of the few Fang members he'd met yet with a working brain and a willingness to learn. He was an organizer, a numbers man, and actually had both a sense of humor and style, which Roman thought was imperative in a good underling.

"Thank you, Perry. You can leave us for the moment. This won't take long. Keep on working on our plan for that Schnee cargo ship. I'm still not happy about the idea of taking it here in port. If you can get the numbers of personnel to match up, though, we'll go with it."

The name of that hated company caused Bonesaw to lose some of his forward momentum, and he even walked forward to take a seat as Roman gestured him to do so before

pausing just as he was about to sit down and then turning around, slamming one large hand down on the desk. "Dammit! What the fuck is going on? Why did you order our forces to leave Mountain Glenn? That base, the underground tunnel and train, all of that is a lynchpin for our plans going forward, right?"

"I think I'd like the same question answered," a new voice said. This voice was that of a young woman, who appeared as if she had just pulled a Neo, leaning against the now-closed doorway behind Bonesaw. She was a heavily tanned young girl, her skin a mocha color, which made her light green, almost lime, colored hair stand out even more. She wore a pair of short pants and a blouse, with two weapons strapped to the small of her tank.

"Emerald!" Roman said mock cheerfully, showing no surprise at the young woman's appearance as he let his feet fall from the desk. "You didn't call ahead. Still, I'm glad you were able to find the place. Please, my house is your house. I'm always in favor of giving back to those less fortunate than myself, and you count on so many levels."

Bonesaw had a much more violent reaction. Twisting around and grabbing at his weapon from his back, he snarled, "Why is she here!?"

Before he could pull the weapon out of its holster, though (Roman had to wonder how the hell he had been able to carry that thing around, and in broad daylight, honestly!) Emerald disappeared from where she had been standing, only to reappear directly in front of the man, her pistol pointed at his skull. "Now, I know this won't put you down. You've got your Aura awakened. But ask yourself this question: do I really think I can keep up with someone who can move as fast as this girl can? Do you, punk?"

"Now, children, while I do approve of a good one-liner, even reused, this is my office. I'd hate to have to redo the carpeting," Roman warned. A tap on a small button underneath his desk with a knee had two gun turrets popping out of the ceiling, swirling around to point at both interlopers. "And don't bother trying to use your Semblance on me, my dear. Those are automated. No brain for you to screw with. Yes, I figured out your Semblance. Wasn't hard, really."

Emerald rolled her eyes but pulled away from Bonesaw, gesturing at the now furiously trembling Bonesaw, whose growling could be heard underneath his mask quite easily from several feet away. "Whatever. I'm not even here to ask about that, really, but I heard about what Bonesaw was so furious about downstairs as he shouted at the rest of the workers you've got here. Why did you have them move?"

"Oh right, you're not from around here, are you? You're from Mistral, I believe?" Emerald's deadpan look said that she certainly wasn't about to answer that, but Roman didn't need her to. He already knew. She was actually from Atlas, something his guests had in common. "And Bonesaw, of course, you're from Atlas. Neither of you know about the Remembrance, do you?"

Both of them looked confused, and Bonesaw actually stopped grinding his teeth to listen for a bit. Roman explained about how Beacon Academy hosted the Remembrance every five years and how it had come up now. "It's bad timing, but we knew it was coming ahead of time long before you were assigned here by Adam, Bonesaw, and Perry, and I had everything ready for a quick dispersal to other locations. Still, if you want to deal with a small army of Hunters, Mountain Glenn is somewhat hard to miss if you know about its existence in the first place. Any of your bullheaded drivers could take you out there on your own. Just remember the old saying about with your shield or on it, old boy. We wouldn't want anyone captured alive to give away secrets, now would we?"

Emerald scowled, one hand coming up to tug at her green locks for a moment. "It's going to be really hard to hide all the dust we've gathered in the city for more than a few days if that."

"It is indeed," Roman said seriously, not making fun of the girl as she brought up an actually valid point. "Transporting the dust back into the city was even harder. I had to hand out a lot of bribes so people didn't notice so much bullhead traffic. But trying to stay hidden with nearly half of Beacon's professors and so many aspiring Huntsmen moving through the city would have been a fool's game."

"We could have launched the attack now!" Bonesaw growled out. "With as much dust as you and our people here are supposed to have stolen, we could have exploded the railroad tunnel back open, and that would let the grim come straight through."

"Not according to my engineers or yours," Roman countered. "We hadn't dug out enough of the tunnel yet, and it sure as heck wasn't stable enough along its length to remain open once the explosion happened nearer to Vale. Which would undoubtedly have killed a lot of your own people. If you don't believe me, take it up with your own folk. Some of them are actually smart enough to know when not to piss in their bed."

Bonesaw snarled at the taunts but turned away and left without another word. For a moment, the two thieves were silent as they listened to Bonesaw stomping away, then Emerald slumped into one of the sofas, kicking up her legs onto it as she stared across the office desk in the center of the room to Roman. "Well, that went about as well as it could probably have for you. But you know the real reason I'm here."

"Arturia Arc, and whether any other Huntsmen at her level are around. Not, considering who Arturia Arc is, that they really need any others," Roman said, setting his scroll down into a small device on the office table, then typing in some controls onto the scroll as the guns in the ceiling receded automatically. Another device lit up as they did, and images of Arturia taken from her time in the Mistral Tournament showed up, along with her Hunter ID card, which quickly segued into a lot of more pertinent information that the Vale Government had compiled. Some of which Arturia would have been immensely angry about.

Emerald snorted. "Setting aside her three sizes and everything else here that isn't all that important, she's got an apartment in town. Any chance of breaking in?"

"Good luck if you want to try. The windows don't open. I checked already, and the apartment has activated motion detector alarms both inside and out on two separate networks. Both the complex and the entrance leading in from the private landing area have retina scanners on their locks. Now, we could probably get by that if the Dark Queen's retina data was in the governmental system, but we don't. We could still probably get into the complex with someone else's data, but not into her room."

Emerald fell silent for a second, flipping from one screen to the next, scowling in annoyance. "So it looks as if she's the only one that's in town that is a strategic target, right?"

"Such an amusing way to put it. I would say she's a strategic obstacle if I was going to call the Dark Queen anything other than a damn threat." Roman snorted, some of his habitual panache leaving him for a second before returning. "And while she's the only huntress or hunter that has come into Vale that isn't supposed to be here, that doesn't mean she's not the only one we need to watch out for. Her brother and younger sister are both extremely dangerous, too."

Emerald looked through a few images that Roman had somehow been able to get out of the Beacon server, as well as several videos taken from the records at the twins' former school. But she wasn't nearly as impressed as Roman was after having fought them. Sure, earth manipulation was an amazing power and could be really dangerous, but both of them seemed like straightforward threats. And as students, they wouldn't be anywhere near as dangerous as someone like Emerald, who had been training in real life-or-death situations for years. *And neither of them has any defense against mental manipulation.* "We have to take her out some way. I know she's a threat, but with my powers, maybe..."

"Oh, hell no!" Roman stood up abruptly, shaking his head and making an 'X' motion with his hands, melodic cudgel hanging off one elbow. "I am not stepping up to that, not even with Neopolitan or you at my side. Arturia Arc is one of the four strongest active Hunters in the world, and her power is damned deadly. She could just soak up all the damage we could do her, figure out your and Neo's powers, and then go on the attack. With her Semblance, one good strike would do any of us in."

Only half of that response had to do with Roman's battle with the two younger Arcs. *I honestly would never have guessed they were actually related, considering what they'd been up to at Hei Days. And then we got information from Mistral about how Harry might not be Tia's real twin but a distant relative.* Neopolitan had been fairly interested in that, doing her version of a full-born girly giggle when they heard it, but Roman hadn't cared so much for that as for the fact that the two students had been very close to defeating him and Neopolitan.

The rest of his unwillingness to fight Arturia, however, was due to having seen her in action occasionally when she was a student at Beacon. Roman was a firm believer in knowing one's own limits, and what he had seen of that young woman told him she was well beyond him in terms of skill, and the amount of Aura she had was just insane, much like her father, whom Roman had once fought. *I got away from that fight with all my limbs intact, and I count myself lucky.*

"I would vote to simply postpone everything until Arc leaves. She's not here for the long term. I know that Beacon offered the Dark Queen a job, but she turned it down, and that apartment is on a short-term one-year lease. And it was never explained to me why we are targeting the Vytal Festival as our go-time in the first place. I would say postpone everything. Slow operations down a bit, sell some of the dust we've gathered to help arm the White Fang better so that when we do strike, they'll be in a better position to help spread chaos and carnage."

The idea of what was planned was monstrously distasteful in Roman's mind but was part of the plan that Cinder had come up with. What the end goal was, he didn't know, and he really didn't want to. The kind of curiosity was what got people burned alive for, after all.

Emerald listened to all this, but she knew something that Roman didn't: auras could be bypassed entirely with the right Semblance. *Fuck, it sounds as if we really will have to bring in that psycho Tyrian if we want to remove this blonde bitch.* "Do you have information on anyone else? Other than the invincible girl and these two, I mean. I already know that she's at Beacon, too."

"The Schnee heiress is also there. I don't know anything much about her combat skills, but that kernel might keep Adam happy, I suppose. An assassination or two thrown her way would make Adam as happy as a dog with a bone." Roman said with a snort.

Rolling her eyes at that, Emerald didn't say anything in return, but understood his point. While Adam was a willing participant in Cinder's plans, he really was a bit of a bull in an Asian shop, especially since his girlfriend had left him or something. Emerald hadn't yet gotten the full story about that, but she had seen the picture of some cat girl in a bedroom where she, Mercury and Cinder had once met Adam. It'd been a very nice picture once, but it had been slashed and used as a target numerous times. Emerald had been deeply disturbed at the time by that and still was, frankly. *Obsessive much?* Still, Roman's idea was a good one, and she told him he could pass that on. "Maybe tell Bonesaw first and have him pass it on to Adam. Make both of those psychopaths happy in one go."

"I already thought of that, actually, and if you hadn't appeared, I might have told him about it when he banged his way in here." Roman sighed theatrically. "Honestly, for all that they want to be treated just as well as humans or think themselves so superior, they really do act like animals sometimes."

“If we can’t break into her apartment, is there any way we could ambush her there instead?”

“Possibly, if we have to fight the Dark Queen at all. It’s as good a place as any so long as we can get into the complex in the first place. Arc might not be so willing to blast out with her insane Semblance if she has to worry about civilians. But again, I’m not going to be part of any kind of fight against her unless I know we have a good chance of winning. The Dark Queen’s far too dangerous to take on haphazardly,” Roman warned seriously. “Maybe if we take her out when she is tired when her aura reserves have already been depleted at her apartment complex, but otherwise, like I just told you, but you might not have heard, my recommendation is to just move the timing of everything back.”

Emerald sneered at that and then held up a scroll of her own. Roman obligingly sent all the information that he and Neopolitan had gathered over to her scroll, and emerald nodded before heading towards the door. Then she paused, clicking her fingers. “Speaking of Adam, he passed on a few things right before I left Mistral. Something about there being a data leak on the White Fang side. And that Ghira was apparently back in communication with Sierra. Do you know anything about that? We can’t afford for the White Fang to back out of our deal. We need their dumb muscle if nothing else.”

“Too true, and they do have a few working brains among them that I’ve been making use of. I’ll follow up on the idea someone is passing information on to the authorities among the White Fang here in Vale. As to the other one, no idea. I’m not exactly connected to the faunus rumor mill or whatever,” Roman chuckled.

“That actually might be a good place to start. Wow, Roman, you actually had a good idea.” Emerald snorted, then finished pulling open the door and leaving without even a farewell.

“Well, that was rude. I suppose the White Fang doesn’t have a monopoly on rudeness,” Roman said, shaking his head as he sat down again and twisted his desk chair around to look at one of the other sofas. Neopolitan appeared there a second later to the sound of shattering glass. His diminutive companion lounged on the sofa as Emerald had with a tub of ice cream balanced on her stomach and in a ridiculously short-cropped shirt and tight yoga pants combo that showed in no uncertain terms that despite her diminutive stature, she was in no way a child. “What do you think?”

Neopolitan hummed, looking at her spoon thoughtfully for a few moments, then made a throat-slashing movement with the now clean spoon.

“No, not yet. I would love to take the bitch out, but unless we can make it look as if she ran into some hunters or huntresses and started a fight for some reason, it would be traced back to us. The last thing I want is to have Cinder looking for us with blood in her eye about how we killed her most trusted follower. Still, that is a possibility...” Roman harmed thoughtfully, leaning back in his chair and setting melodic cudgel on the desk. “I think Arturia might also

represent an opportunity. An opportunity for a chance of going independent again. Whatever happens, she's bound to put up one hell of a fight, and if Cinder is personally involved, well... In chaos comes opportunity."

Neopolitan's eyes lit up, and she put the now empty tub of ice cream down the floor, pointing at herself, to which Roman simply nodded in reply. With that, Neopolitan went from laying out on the sofa to flinging herself into the air with no apparent effort. Landing astride Roman, her mouth sought his and Roman chuckled throatily, knowing precisely how talk of murder, particularly of people who thought they could control the two of them, got Neopolitan worked up. It looked as if investigating the idea there was a turncoat among the White Fang would have to wait a few hours.

OOOOOOO

Out in the wild, very few aerial Grimm flew as high as bullheads could regularly. They could if they sensed humans in the area or were commanded by an S-class Grimm, but mostly, Nevermore would fly only a few hundred feet over the tree line. Or, in the case of Mountain Glenn, the skyline. Since none of the Huntsman or trainees were feeling fear at present, the group of transport bullheads that were carrying the teams were able to get into position above the city.

That wasn't to mean they could just hover there, of course. Bullheads like this were not designed to do that, and the noise from them did bring a few Nevermore up to investigate. Even one Greater Nevermore, but Glynda took care of it, pulping its wings and silencing its mouth before it could do anything. Yet the Grimm did make it so that the students were spread out over the city rather than coming down in teams.

They had all known this would happen, though, and even the freshman teams, for whom this would be the first real combat drop, took to it with aplomb. Some even took joy in it.

Pyrrha had a secret. It wasn't a deep, dark or mysterious one, but it was still a secret, something she had never told anyone else but Harry. She loved flying. Pyrrha loved feeling the wind in her face, the speed of flight, of feeling the air all around her. It felt like freedom to her, in a way that she had never really known since becoming a gynaíka Spartiátissa. Ever since she was young, there had always been something, something she had to be doing, some training or duty or meeting with which her parents would push her or prod her forward, constraining her, 'guiding' her. But in the air, there was none of that, no feeling of anything but freedom.

Harry had responded to this by promising to take Pyrrha flying for an entire date in the future. "Just like the carpet ride scene in Aladar. I'll even treat you like a princess, although I'm not certain how much of a difference that will make," he had laughed, shaking his head. That had earned him quite a lengthy snog.

Even falling as they had done during initiation was pleasant. So Pyrrha enjoyed the feeling now as she plummeted down towards the city of Mountain Glenn while the rest of her mind was observing the world around her and the dead city below.

Mountain Glenn was very much a dead city. Living cities would have moving people, color, and far more intact buildings. The majority of buildings she could see from where she was being dropped off by the Bullhead high, high above them, were all battered, damaged or outright rubble. But you could still see the shape of most. There was a movie theater over there, an apartment complex there, and a massive tower-like building almost directly below her and to one side. Further down, she could even see several signs on the various buildings, street signs on the road, and even a few cars or bullheads that had been left behind or destroyed in the retreat somehow.

What really struck Pyrrha as sad was the lack of color. Even as she noticed several Nevermores lazily flying around the place on the same level as she was for just a moment before Pyrrha plummeted past, she couldn't help herself from noticing that fact. There were large splotches of green here and there where a park or a tree had grown out beyond its environs, and there was a great deal of moss and even a few shrubs whose existence she could not explain, but mostly, the city was starkly gray with concrete, dusted with the red of rusted steel where the bones of the buildings had been laid bare.

There should be something, she thought, something left over from the people here. *A colorful window, a blanket left on the streets from when they were running away, advertising signs, billboards, something!* But there wasn't. Even as she landed, Pyrrha didn't see anything like that. It was as if the Grimm had gone out of their way to destroy everything and anything colorful within the city.

Pyrrha took a moment to survey the area around her, glancing up occasionally at the group of Nevermore she had noticed. But because she wasn't feeling fear or terror or anything like that, and the Nevermore hadn't been looking in her direction, she had passed through them easily. Instead, they were winging up towards the disturbance higher up, and she could see the Bullhead with the rest of her team had been forced to move away. *Drat.*

As Pyrrha watched, several Nevermore came apart, hit from on high by silenced rounds by a few of the snipers or the scattered guns of the bullheads. *But remember what Arturia said. Those bullheads won't be around all the time. They don't have the fuel or the bullets necessary to really create overhead cover for us here in the city. Within a few hours, the Nevermore will be back in the area, other flocks moving into the now empty zone, or others simply flying up from the city itself. Always watch the skies*, she thought, her mind adopting Arturia's accent for a moment at that last line, causing her to smile a bit, even as she spoke into her pickup.

"This is Pyrrha, I've landed. I think I'm on the roof of an apartment complex of some kind."

“Do you have visual on any signs?” Arturia asked crisply. “You’re the first one to touch down, Pyrrha, so you’re going to be the rally point for the rest of us.”

Arturia sounded annoyed at that, something that Pyrrha fully understood for several reasons. The last thing she needed was another reason for people to assume Pyrrha was on another level than them. *And worse, being the rally point means I will need to stay put!*

With a scowl, Pyrrha glanced down towards the distant streets, pulling her rifle up to her eye to use its new scope function for a moment. She’d recently upgraded her rifle’s scope with Ruby’s help and was amazed that Milo was still able to transform so smoothly. With the aid of the sniper scope, Pyrrha was able to read some of the signs, although there was a lot of moss on two of them, something she warned Arturia about.

Still, that seemed to be enough for Arturia to know where she was and issue orders, the first order being the one Pyrrha least wanted to hear. “Remain on station. You’re near the center of our assigned zone. I’m going to make certain we drop Nora and a few others near you, including our company’s Umbral Connection Device. Once it lands, input your scroll and use the Beacon locator within so the other team members can home in on your location.”

The Umbral Connection Device was a booster for the communications network that connected all of the various city-states. This far away from Vale, and with the tower here in Mountain Glenn having been destroyed during the fall of the city, they needed local boosters in order to keep using their communications equipment. Otherwise, they’d be down to simple radios, such as the one they were currently using, and there was far too much concrete and metal around to interfere with signals for anyone to be happy with that once all of the teams were on the ground and moving through the city. Thus, each company had been assigned a booster in order to help with communications.

Scowling a little at the fact that she wouldn’t be involved in any of the fighting just yet, Pyrrha replied in the affirmative and began to patrol around the edge of the rooftop, her gaze flicking down around and up constantly. *If I’m not going to get into any of the fighting just yet, I can at least do my job well.*

Which was the moment the rooftop decided it no longer counted as a solid. There was a slight rumble, and Pyrrha instantly pushed off the concrete under her, watching with wide eyes as the corner of the roof caved inward. Dust flew for a second, and then there was a series of growls from below, noises which wiped Pyrrha’s still-present scowl off her face. “Well, at least it won’t be boring. And I don’t suppose Arturia or Harry can complain if the Grimm have already spotted me, hmm?”

With that, she charged down, Milo turning into its javelin form as she did, finding herself faced with a few Creepers. With a wild grin on her face, she attacked, humming under her breath.

OOOOOOO

Unlike his partner and ladylove, Harry could control where he went down, even if his first attempt to follow Pyrrha had been aborted when the bullhead had been forced to bank away. Now, with Arturia ordering Nora and a few others down right on top of Arturia's position, Harry knew he would have to do without his partner for a time. *With my magic, I'm far more useful on the move right now. There will be time later to bring my skills at static defenses into play.*

He still listened in on Arturia's orders though, and happily watched as Nora leaped out after a final tight hug with Ren, following the junior Bartrum Ochre out to join Pyrrha on the ground. The massive, stoic bear faunus was the one who had been assigned to carry the coms device, which Harry honestly likened to a somewhat large version of a WW2 company radio unit.

When it came his turn, the air was once more alive with Nevermore coming up to investigate where their fellows had gone. Not many, but enough to again cause Harry and Ren's landing some trouble. Harry dealt with this by simply using his magic to levitate him for a few moments until he saw Ren in the air below him, and aimed for the same building his friend would land on.

To one side, a member of one of the junior squads, Damien Citron, also landed within sight of the pair. He landed well, but on a building that looked like it was another few hard winters away from collapsing. Worse, though, Harry could see movement nearby behind Damien, and quickly waved at him, making a hold position movement with one hand. All of them had been drilled on the way out by Arturia on hand signals.

Damien scowled a little, but knowing protocol he replied with the upraised fist of the affirmative sign, before looking around him, his weapon, a double ended staff still in his hand as he glared in every direction waiting for Grimm to pounce. His weapon was a mecha-shift weapon, which came apart at the half and then formed back together as a pistol grip appeared, giving him a double barrel shotgun, which would be perfect for clearing out buildings. He'd done it several times over the years since he had come to Beacon, and knew his role well. *Although at first we will have to worry about noise, but not for long, Boomstick, don't worry, you'll have some fun.*

Ren looked back at Harry, having landed in a crater on the rooftop of the building they landed on, a long, low building with only one story to it that looked like a market or a furniture store of some kind. A silent hand motion, and the motion of two pressed together fingers moving from one side to another indicated the need for silence, caused him to nod as well, moving in his team leader's direction.

Nodding back, Harry took a moment to hit himself with a Mufflatio, although he knew that he'd need to watch where he put his feet down regardless. Sound canceling charms didn't stop stone from banging against stone, and if said stones left the area of influence of the spell he could still be discovered. Worse, like most spells in this world bar transfiguration of nonliving things, charms did not last more than an hour of use. *And I know that Grimm can still sense me if I don't keep my emotions calm, drat it.*

When Ren reached him, Harry pointed at where he had seen movement. A few beaks were jutting out from several windows in a taller nearby building, and even a few Nevermore heads, cawing to one another as they looked upwards. None of the Grimm were looking in their direction, but if Damien moved, it was very obvious that they would be drawn in his direction. He was right below their position, hidden at present by a piece of rubble from the larger building, but it wasn't big enough to let him get to any other cover.

Damien cursed under his breath, indicating with a single curt hand motion that he understood, and would remain undercover for now, before moving deeper into cover. "Team ORCA, I'm stuck in position. Harry and Ren are nearby and will assist." With that he cut off the coms, and waited, hearing both his teammate's acknowledgement and Arturia's. They weren't supposed to start really hunting yet, just scout around and avoid contact until they knew what they were dealing with, but exceptions could be made.

Hearing all this over his own com, Harry looked around, then found a fire escape to one side of the building, and gestured Ren to follow him.

They didn't climb down the fire escape very far, and not just because half of it was buried in the rubble of another building that had collapsed into the side of the one they'd landed on. Instead, Harry flipped himself out and then down into an open window to one side, entering the building through a second story window. Ren followed, and the pair found themselves standing near the left side of the interior of the building.

Harry tapped his com bead, grateful for the radios as they could not use their scrolls so far out from Vale. "This is Harry, we're in a building, may lose coms in a minute."

"Roger. Confirm on plan to relieve Mr. Citron?" Arturia's answer came back quickly.

"Confirmed. We'll clear out this building, move to the skyrise overlooking his position and start there. Will advise when we're done." With that, Harry signed off, and looked to Ren, who nodded and took point.

The pair stood in a small locker area, possibly for the workers who had worked in this building. Several of the lockers had been wrenched open at some point. No clue remained to show who had used the space, although Harry had to snort and exchange a small snicker with Ren as exiting that room, they discovered they'd landed in the girl's changing room. For some reason that tickled both boys' funny bones, and they moved on with smiles even as they heard movement ahead of them.

The next room they entered was a off-duty restroom with four doorways, one leading down into the stairs that would take them downstairs, another leading into some kind of office, and two bathrooms marked male and female. The male bathroom door was ajar, and a Creeper was coming out of it, a sight that nearly had Harry laughing again as his mind wandered, thinking the Grimm might've been using the facilities for a second. Then the sight of four other Grimm, all

Creepers, lazing about in the room as if it was their personal den registered, and he charged forwards, gun up and firing.

So deep into the building, they didn't need to worry about noise so much. Dust-based weapons were much quieter than the gunpowder weapons Harry had seen back in his old world anyway. Outside, Harry would need to rely on his magic on top of the silencers their guns were fitted with for this mission to make certain the sound would not carry too far through the concrete jungle, but inside, the silencers were more than enough.

Creepers were low level Grimm, more mouth than body, no arms to speak of, that rushed forward on large powerful back legs to bite their enemies, reminding Harry of dinosaurs or fantasy monsters he had seen in his last life. They could be very dangerous, but only in massive numbers. Five was not a massive number, and he and his temporary partner put them down before any could get even a snarl or growl off.

However, three more came up from below. Their growls already echoing Harry quickly hit them all with the muffling spell, so they could not cry out for more reinforcements than they already had.

At the same time, Ren dashed forward, leaping up high over the first of the Grimm out of the stairwell. He landed feetfirst onto the back of the last of the trio, staring down the stairwell for a second before slicing downwards with Twilight Flower then stepping forward as the second Grimm in the line tried to turn, snapping.

At the same time, Harry shot the first one, then with a gesture, pulled both of the remainder out of the stairwell as Ren leapt clear, killing with single shots a second later. Once the Grimm finished decomposing, the two Hunters in training exchanged a nod, and Ren took point, heading down the stairs. They killed six more Creepers, moving silently through the main floor of the furniture building as Harry had supposed from above, seeing here the first splashes of color since they'd landed: a blue sofa, torn apart by a creeper who had been using it as a bed. A lounge chair in a garish orange color whose demise Ren personally applauded actually stopping and staring at the thing before shuddering and moving on. Here and there they even found some furniture that was still intact, showing that in the great retreat from Mountain Glenn, furniture was the last thing on anyone's list.

Once the last of the Grimm inside the furniture store were dealt with, they moved to the windows, staring out into the street beyond, seeing a few Beowolves moving around. But from here, they couldn't see any Nevermore thanks to the angle of the windows.

"What do you think?" Ren whispered.

Harry hadn't been turned around inside the building, and knew where Damien was still waiting for them, as well as the building where they'd seen the Nevermore. "The building with the Nevermore is to our left and down two buildings, both smaller than this one. We'll have to rush across the street to get there though. I don't like that, but I can use my Semblance to cover us."

“As can I.” Ren reminded his leader.

Harry nodded, understanding what Ren was talking about. His Semblance, Tranquility, allowed Ren to mask emotions. Not just negative ones, which the Grimm could use to find someone, but positive emotions too. His Semblance and the fact it could only be set in ‘neutral’ so to speak, was why Ren was always so calm and even-keeled. It was fascinating, but right now, it wasn’t as needed, thanks to Harry’s charms. *Which I can use without any of the downsides Ren faces when he uses his Semblance.*

“Let’s go. I don’t want Damien to stay in one position for too long, who knows if there are other Nevermore moving around more than the ones in their nests we saw.”

As they moved, Arturia’s voice came in over the radio. “Company Black, we are all down. You should have scroll-based communications coming up in five.” For some reason Harry could detect a hint of amusement in Arturia’s voice, but it was almost buried under her cold exterior persona. “If you have not yet found a partner, rally to Niko’s current position without engaging any Grimm you can avoid. It will be the center of our zone, and her locator beacon will be coming up in a moment along with our scroll coms. Other than that, stay unseen as much as possible from the air. There are still Nevermore in the air above the city, and more are coming in from the around it disturbed by the bullheads. We cannot move openly until they settle back down or we risk being overwhelmed.”

Arturia let that sink in, then began to call out names, asking for positions of the various team leaders and students who had not yet met up with anyone from their original teams. She had apparently landed near one of the other freshmen teams led by a hammer wielder like Nora, and had taken them under her wing and were moving through a street lined with large-scale clothing shops at the moment. That was at the far end of their command zone though, and it would take her some time to push towards where Pyrrha and the team with the UCD.

Meanwhile, Ruby and the single senior grade team under Timothy had dropped in relatively more condensed clumps. Harry wondered how Ruby and Timothy had devised that, but both of them were out near the edge of the city, the outer edge of their command zone in that direction. From there, they would be able to see the large and now thoroughly breached outer wall that had once protected the city, as well as the forest beyond. The two teams were ordered to stay on post there to watch for more Grimm coming into the city.

As Arturia continued to speak, scrolls began to flicker on and most of the teams switched to scroll-based coms, opening up coms while inside many of the buildings, making coordination easier. Harry took note of that, and even better, the way all the team leader’s had a map of the city, continually updating. *Amazing. This reminds me of watching muggle militaries back home doing training, which is amazing.*

With that help, the other Huntsmen were able to give their own positions. Every team leader had downloaded a map of the city that they had been given from the last group of Huntsman

sent on the Remembrance. Using it, Harry could figure out where Tia and her team were, as well as see Nora and Pyrrha's position along with that of the other teens.

Tia had landed well away from her team, alongside one of the other junior girls, a team leader from the sophomore class named Lavender Louvre, whose accent strongly put Harry in mind of Fleur Delacour. The rest of Team GART was also somewhat scattered thanks to a Nevermore flock having come up and interfered with the landing of their group all at once. But Sung-Sun was near to team Ruby and to team CRSH, and was already directing Mila and Apacci towards her position. Tia would work with Lavender until they and the rest of Lavender's team, CLCO met up.

And again as he heard his second lover's voice, Harry could tell something was off. Tia, unlike Arturia though, was deeply annoyed by something. Whereas Lavender had a smirky kind of tone to her...

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Tia stared at the doorway ahead of her, which seemed to be filled with a strange, thick, ropelike substance. She didn't need Lavender's gesture for her to back away, knowing that heading in that direction would probably be a bad idea. Lavender also glared at the webs ahead of them before turning, moving to her temporary partner's side, having to take two steps for every one of Tia's long strides.

Lavender Louvre was short, almost to the Ruby/Weiss level, but she had long magnificent looking lavender hair in a long ponytail with some kind of filament woven through the hair that could make it into a weapon, spikes appearing along its length. When they first met up, Tia had seen Lavender use that like it was a whip, but that wasn't her Semblance. Her Semblance was simply called Multiple, and it created multiple hands which could sprout from portions of her body, or even have hover in the air around her, although not at any distance beyond fifty feet. It was why instead of having a single weapon, Lavender always had multiple pistols hung in small snug containers in a large backpack, each of which could mecha-shift into stabbing daggers.

"I 'ate spiders, but I never zought that zere would be a Grimm variant! I suppose it should 'ave been an obvious conneczion shouldn't it?"

"Most spiders are good. They kill bugs and mosquitoes." Tia answered with a true farm girl's opinion, before pausing, laying a gentle hand across the way to block Lavenders move forward. Ahead of them there are several doors leading off of the whole way they were moving through, leading to different offices. Both of them had entered via a shattered side of the building that had led them into what looked like a larger office, or some kind of communal office maybe? There had been what looked like walls set up between tiny cubicles. Lavender had muttered something about it being cubicle hell, but Tia hadn't gotten the reference.

More importantly at the moment however, all of the doors along the hallway were broken down, and more of the same kind of webbing could be seen covering the entryways.

“Crud...” Lavender hissed, looking from side to side. “Do you think you can cut our way upwards?”

Tia nodded, and raised Tiburon slicing into the bottom of the ceiling above, the edge of her weapon covered with swiftly moving water giving it a cutting edge that allowed her to cut through the ceiling like it was warm butter. *Hmm... I'm getting hungry.*

Lavender used several of her arms to catch the ceiling portion as it fell, then used two more to block a few chunks of rubble that came away with the cut out portion. As she did, there was a skittering noise from the darkness above, and Lavender cursed, then instead of setting the rubble down, hurled it back upwards into and through the hole. Shapes moved, and one of them was struck by a piece of the rubble, before the others were falling down toward the odd pair, several spider Grimm one after another.

Tia took the first one, slicing it in half mid air, but the next one lashed out at her not with arms or claws or mandibles, whatever they are called on spiders, but with something shooting out of its mouth towards her. She raised Tiburon using it as a shield, but whatever it was shooting at Tia wasn't like water or the acid as she had feared after hearing what had happened to Professor Peach earlier in the year. Instead, the substance stuck to her weapon, becoming a mass of fibers there, as Lavender could kill the Grimm that had shot it at her.

But as they were dealing with those two, several more came out of the doorways, shooting more webbing their way.

Summoning up more multiple arms, Lavender lashed out with them as she shouted, “I really ‘ate spiders!’” Instead of having her multiple arms grab out weapons from her backpack, she instead sent them forward empty-handed, using them to disperse the webbing that the spider Grimm were shooting at them, while she armed herself with two of her pistols, firing back.

Tiburon swinging forward, Tia lashed out as well via the use of water creek dust crystal set in her weapon. A crescent shaped attack made out of water flashed forwards, slicing into several of the attacking spiders. Two of them leapt up on high over the attack and scuttled across the ceiling, but both fell to Lavender's precise shooting. Another skittered across the side of the hall, leaping from one side to another as Tia's attack passed, closing and leaping forward after once more launching a web attack. This time, the attack wasn't a stream of sticky webbing, instead, it was an actual web which flashed out from its mouth quickly enveloping the entire corridor.

Lavender dodged under it rolling forward under the attack, while Tia, too tall to evade like that, tried to use Tiburon again to cut down into it. That worked in a way, but the sticky substance still kept on flying forward, impacting her arms and upper body even as the spider itself was cut in half by her sword.

For a moment, no further spider Grimm came their way, and both freshman breathed a sigh of relief. Then Lavender summoned still more of her multiple arms, the hands moving to pull at the

substance splattered across Tia's upper body and her sword. The substance did not want to come off, and she was forced to use all of her Aura construct's strength, while Tia did the same pulling in the opposite direction. That this resulted in Tia slamming her body fully back into one of the walls enough to cause the hallway to shake made Lavender snicker, but eventually the substance was pulled off.

"How much do you want to bet zose are not ze only spider Grimm in zis building?" The look Tia gave Lavender as she spoke caused Lavender to laugh again, nodding. This time arming two of her multiple arms with daggers, Lavender sent them forward, ready to hack at any web that got in her way while she kept a safe distance.

The two of them moved down the core door, weapons at the ready, but found no more spiders in the hallway, but all the doors led into rooms that are full of webs. It was evident that while each of the spider Grimm needed space, they filled that space with webbing, making it impossible for the two girls to get through at any speed.

Eventually, they were forced to cut their way out of the building, first cutting the door to an elevator off, and then, with Tia hanging on the other side, cutting the outer wall as well. All while Lavender kept her covered, firing down at a mass of spider Grimm crawling up the walls towards them. But there were too many, and As Tia finished, Lavender dropped one of her satchel charges, a piece of special equipment that each of the team leaders had been given for this mission.

A moment later, the two girls heard it *crump* as it hit the bottom floor. The fire and the shockwave of the explosion blasted upwards through the shaft and with Tia in the lead, the two girls leaped out into the street beyond.

Touching down, the pair raced into cover behind a large tree that had seemingly grown out of a small grove in front of the building, where they waited, scanning the skies. It didn't look as if any Nevermore had seen them and soon the pair were on their way once more through the streets, dodging from one bit of cover to another.

But as they were walking off, Tia began to feel a little sticky. She reached down to her arms, feeling at them with one hand, and scowled as she had trouble pulling her hand away from her upper arm.

Lavender looked over at her in confusion as Tia gestured with Tiburon. A ball of water appeared over her head, splashing down and covering her from head to toe. "As zere are no boys around, why exactly did 'ou just douse yourself wiz water like zat?"

At first, Tia didn't answer, simply slipping her weapon back into its holster, and then patting her chest and upper body again with both hands, before scowling in irritation. "I still feel sticky!"

At that, Lavender laughed, shaking her head, and leading the way off. "Better you zan me, ma cherie."

Tia's hidden mouth twisted a little into a moue, but she said nothing, following after the girl and trying to ignore how sticky and uncomfortable she felt.

OOOOOOO

Shaking his head Harry put that minor mystery on the back burner for now. Instead he called Damien, telling him that he and Ren were at street level and ready to start moving toward his position. Damien made the double mouth click of affirmative, but also in so doing warned that he couldn't make much noise. Harry asked quickly, "is your position being compromised?"

A single click answered, no and Harry went on. "Are the Nevermore moving about more?"

The double click answered then, and Harry nodded to Ren. "We're on our way." With that he clicked the communications device off, and shrugged his shoulders. "Fast it is, then."

With a faint smile of agreement, Ren made for the back door and pushed it open before Harry thought about silencing the door. The shrieking of it drew the attention of several dozen Grimm in the area. "Oh well, trap it is," Harry quipped, repeating his earlier wording deliberately.

With a brief smile, Ren stuck his head out of the door and let the Grimm already responding to the noise of the door all see him, then ducked back inside the building, and the Grimm followed after, only for silence to reign as the last of them entered the furniture store. Moments later, it was the two humans who peered out into the street beyond once more before racing along the street to enter the high-rise that housed the Nevermore currently.

What followed over the next hour were a series of short, primarily close combat battles, where the two of them moved from one building to another, killing any Grimm that saw them whenever they weren't covered by Harry's spells. That unfortunately happened all too often as his charms wore off quickly in this world, and his silencing spells most of all.

After receiving the all-clear, Damien fought his way down through the building he had landed on, a simple enough task given how much of it was destroyed. Soon he met them in an alleyway set between two taller buildings. From there, the trio continued to move around the area, shifting from one building to another, mapping the interior of the buildings and clearing them out as they went, only using their guns when they had to, with Harry muffling the noise of battle using his 'Semblance' as much as possible.

This made it almost ridiculously easy for them to kill the Grimm without their presence being discovered. They were also helped in this by the Grimm's nature.

It's kind of surprising, Harry reflected as he, Damien and Ren moved through another building. *The Grimm in their so-called natural environment, although there is really nothing natural about them, are almost lazy until they spot a human.* Then they went from lazy to alert and raging in an instant. But it was interesting to be certain. When he and his sisters had been scouting around in the Grimm lands out beyond Evig Låga they had seen much the same thing. Unless

they were 'hungry' or saw a human, Grimm were just very lazy and laid back. Not really natural so to speak for the animals they were made to ape, and it was an interesting juxtaposition.

Other teams were at not having it nearly as easy.

For example, team Ruby, stationed at the outer edge of the command zone had to clear one of the guard towers set inside the outer wall, which would give them a commanding position for defense in the future. But there were a lot of Grimm inside, creepers and Weblings, the same type Tia had run into, which none of them had dealt with before. They had a devil of a time, since those spiders could come at them from every angle and they couldn't afford to do to match damage to the actual structure, limiting what Weiss and Yang could do to their mutual frustration.

Helping Damien meet up with his team took longer, but eventually, they were able to leave Damien with his actual partner, a young black haired girl with a svelte sprinter's body and a mecha-shift katana of some kind. Leaving the pair to make their way towards the rest of their team, Harry and Ren worked their way deeper into Company Black's assigned territory, still killing Grimm as they went, although Ren was beginning to get tired.

While they had been working on his endurance as much as possible, with all the other demands on their time they really couldn't put in as much time in that as his lack of endurance warranted. Luckily Ren only needed to use Tranquility a few times, but even that had helped to drain his energy.

Eventually they heard the sound of fighting in a building at a crossroads ahead of them, and ducking into an alleyway, Harry called ahead, peering around to get the names of the streets, speaking them quickly into the intercom. "Friendly coming in. Who's there?"

"This is Lavender Louvre of team Calico. Here wiz Tia from team Garnet, moving towards where my 'eam were just assigned to clear out a mall on ze ozer side of our sector. Which direczion are you coming from, 'arry?"

Harry quickly relayed the information, and the four teens met up moments later in the first story of what looks like a small mom-and-pop shop, complete with an apartment up top. Certainly some of the things on the floor seemed to put indicate a family had lived here. As well as the skeletons.

It wasn't the first time that Harry and Ren had seen those as they move through the city. While initially organized, the evacuation of Mountain Glenn had quickly turned into a riot, then a route and finally a massacre as the underground caves spewed more Grimm directly into the underground train system.

And even during the initial stage of evacuation, people had been left behind all across the city. Harry and Ren had seen several such, including a group of three Hunters who had made a last stand at a large intersection. An ambulance was nearby, another man dead within, his weapon

rusted to the floor. That was the first place Harry and Ren left a marker, a small, hand-sized marker. There were several others already there from other Remembrances, but that hadn't mattered to either teen.

The next had been inside a kitchen store, where several people had fortified up in an effort to survive, using makeshift weapons to try and fight off the Grimm. That kind of thing got to both men, showing that despite the fear and terror Grimm radiated to those without Aura, the common folk had still tried to fight back when cornered.

Here the skeletons showed an equally poignant scene. A family, their skeletons still overlapping. A skeleton who Harry took to be the father by the doorway, a massive ladle of all things laying beside the skeleton, half in and half out of the building, rusted with age, while in his other hand a large kitchen knife. Underneath the skeleton, a backpack, its outer cloth shell barely in one piece, with several bits of debris and shattered items, including what looked like a small glass figure, shattered on the ground, its upper half still in one piece, showing what looked like the upper body of a man and woman hugging one another.

Two other skeletons, the overlapping, one in front of the other towards the doorway. Their clothing like the first had long since decayed, but the larger one still had a few golden bangles on her arms and the difference in hips was obvious. Another, even smaller one, dead behind the cash register, where she must have been hiding. Protected somewhat by the elements inside the building, that skeleton still retained some of its clothing, and a skirt was easy to make out. As well as the doll that stuck out from underneath the clothing.

As the two young men stood in respectful silence watching as Lavender laid out a marker by the mother and child, Tia knelt down, gently pushing the skeleton out of the way to pick up the doll, looking at it. While the visible portions of her face over her long turtleneck was its usual unemotional self, Harry knew that she was feeling a great amount of sadness and rage right now judging by how carefully she was moving.

Wordlessly he moved towards her, pulling her into a gentle hug, then letting one hand slip down her arm until it reached her own hand, gently taking the doll from her and putting it back down. Then he led her away, saying nothing. Nothing he could have said it would've been appropriate right now.

A few minutes later however, after Lavender was able to meet up with her team, and they started to move towards where Sung-Sun and the rest of team GART were, Harry had to ask. "By the way, Tia, why is your skin and outfit so sticky? It feels as if you bathed in syrup."

Tia's habitual silence turned huffy at that point, and she turned away, not answering.

Soon after that, Pyrrha and Nora were released to meet up with Harry and Ren. This took them a while even using Harry's powers as the Cleansing was fully on at that point, but eventually the quartet were able to meet up in what looked like an apartment complex much like the one Arturia was now living in. And as they did, there was only one question on Harry's mind,

somewhat like the one he'd asked Tia an hour or more before. Looking at his wet, scuffed, and dirty girlfriend/partner, he could only say, "What the heck happened to you, Pyrrha?"

Pyrrha sheepishly shook her head, running her hand through her hair, removing a glob of dried mud as she did. "Ugh. It turns out the city's water was fed by a few underground aquifers. One of which had overflowed it's well to the point it caused one of the buildings to subside. I didn't realize the ground I was jumping down into wasn't exactly solid, and found myself plopping into dirt. I was then attacked by several Nevermore and Creepers, forcing me to, well, wallow in the mud a bit."

Chuckling, Harry shook his head, and was about to say that she very obviously had dibs on the shower when they returned to Beacon, but then he remembered a scene he had seen earlier while checking on a noise when he, Ren and Damien had been moving through the city. "Well, for now, I can use my Semblance to clean you up a bit. But later we might need to look into some kind of alternate means of cleaning up for you and Tia. I'll tell you what happened to her later, it was a far more dramatic than yours. For now though, let's get killing, troops."

"Oh, fearless leader, you say the most awesome things, you are literally the second best guy in the world!" Nora cooed.

With most of the teams reformed, the killing began in earnest. Instead of moving to avoid contact with the Grimm, the teams now sought that contact out in an organized fashion. Arturia directed them expertly, with Company Black's disparate squads working together to either clear out buildings, as team Ruby already had, or creating small killing grounds outside and pulling in groups of wandering Creepers and Beowolves.

This was not easy. There were a lot of buildings and uncounted Grimm within the city and it became a battle of attrition. Students needed to break contact and rest occasionally throughout the day, while aerial Grimm kept on entering the town, making the fighting more difficult than it would otherwise have been. And as the cleansing continued, the Grimm slowly became aware as the day went on about what was going on. They began to move around the city more, and those Grimm within the buildings were more aware, already roving around within those buildings.

But even so, the various groups of Grimm did not work together. Nevermores did not work with Creepers, Creepers did not work with Beowolves, and so forth. In their territory, Harry felt the Spider-like Grimm were the hardest to fight. Called Weblings, they were about the size of Weiss or Ruby standing up, exceptionally fast, and, as Tia discovered to her great annoyance, Weblings were also very good at ambushes.

Occasionally even the lesser Grimm, Creepers or Beowolves, worked quite well as their own packs. At one point a team under Oobleck's command, Company Historian (the only one not named a color) found themselves ambushed from on high by Creepers who had moved into buildings all around them as they dealt with another band of Creepers and then leaped out

onto them. This didn't amount to much, the team was well up to dealing with the Creepers even so, but it was a reminder that even without an S-class leading them, Grimm could sometimes exhibit animal cunning that could take you by surprise.

On the other side of the spectrum, Harry was surprised at how easy Nevermore were to kill while they were on the ground. He hadn't had much experience fighting aerial type Grimm before coming to Beacon, but the Nevermore were... well they were easily the simplest of the Grimm to fight at this point he had ever seen. On the ground it seemed as if they had two different instincts fighting one another. One, the birdlike instincts which came with their shape was to get into the air where they could use their natural abilities better. The second was a Grimm instinct to close with the humans.

The result was they got in one another's way, bumbling, stumbling, almost comical in a way. With Pyrrha and Ren killing any who tried to get away and Nora and Harry in among them thanks to his spells. They were next to useless on the ground, and a lot of the teens enjoyed slaughtering them, seeing it as a way to repay them for causing so much trouble while they were being dropped off.

As the sun began to set, the area was declared free of Grimm. There were still a few packets of Grimm, but none very large, and at Arturia's orders, Harry headed towards the outer wall.

Elsewhere, each of the companies began to perform a few tasks. One group of juniors went around surveying the sector to start designating kill zones. Timothy's team began to make out markings that would be transcribed onto the company's maps, splitting the sector further up into defensive zones, with the outermost being by the wall and the innermost being near the center of the city, like the spokes on a wheel. Two other teams were assigned on preparing a campsite for the night. The whole company would remain in one place for the night they would remain in the city, with watches set up around the camp and a team patrolling the buildings around it.

And of course, throughout this, the Huntsmen-in-training went about placing markers and taking pictures. The better to remember the tragedy that had occurred here.

During this phase of the operation, one team under Company Red discovered what they thought was a sign of the last chapter in that sad tale.

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Junior team leader Frederica Springgale of Team SUST (Sunset) stared down at what her team members had discovered. A crevice, a crack in a portion of the road near the center of the city that led down into what looks like an emergency shaft of some kind. Deep into it, she could see the gleam of metal as Douglas Uguisucha {yes that is a real color...} shown a flashlight that was a part of his rifle down into the hole. "I thought you said that all of the entrances into the underground rail systems and the emergency bunkers had been shut during past Remembrances."

“They were, and they are, Goodwitch and the rest checked them out the moment they were down. This must lead to a maintenance shaft or something that was then connected to the emergency bunkers later.” Frederica answered, shaking her head. “And I don’t know about you, but I am not going down there to find out for sure. And I don’t think it’s worth calling in either.”

“Nope.” Came three voices, and Frederica nodded firmly. All of the team knew that if they call something like this in, then their team leader, Professor Goodwitch, would tell them to investigate further. And none of them were willing to head down there and discover that it really was connected to one of the emergency bunkers. Which, during the evacuation of Mountain Glenn, had become abattoirs. The skeletons they had found scattered throughout the city were more than bad enough.

“In that case, let’s set up a trap. We still have two of our satchel cases. Lis, Stephen, you two get working on that. Douglas and I will be on overwatch.” In moments, what amounted to Remnant’s version of plastique explosives had been settled down into the hole near the top, with several wires crisscrossing across the crevice they had discovered.

None of them noticed as they were working on this the mark of the White Fang painted down on the entryway leading deeper into what they had thought of as a maintenance shaft. The base underneath Mountain Glenn would remain undiscovered, for now.

OOOOOOO

Seeing Arturia waiting for him in the guard tower, Harry smiled at her, a welcome she returned, neither willing to go over to give him a hug with others in the area, including Glynda at this point. Her company, Company Gold, had quickly cleared out their zone, and she had been moving around the city using her Semblance to repair the outer wall and guard towers as best she could.

Unfortunately there was a limit to what her telekinetic Semblance could do, and filling in missing parts, pulling up buried rubble many tons thick to fill holes several hundred feet wide was difficult for her. Glynda had been able to block some of the rents in the outer wall, but not all of them. One in particular bothered her a bit, leading out as it did into a wide trail of some kind through the forest beyond. What had caused it she could not tell, but it concerned her.

When the issue with the outer wall was explained to Harry, he sighed, then looked over to the nearest hole in the outer wall of the city, shaking his head. “I’ll do it. But I demand someone else is on cooking duty tonight for Company Black.” *I would like some time to myself and other... endeavors tonight.*

Harry resolutely did not look at towards his older sister who would actually let loose a little whimper at his declaration, instead looking to Glinda, who was looking at him in surprise. “Mr. Arc, surely you cannot believe you would be able to repair the entire outer wall. Nothing we have done in our lessons has ever indicated you could use your Semblance on such a scale.”

“Repair the entire thing, no. Replace the holes in it with something even stronger, yes.” With that, Harry moved forward, laying his hands down on the ground in front of one of the massive gashes torn out of the outer wall. He then concentrated, and a metal wall began to appear there, flowing up out of the ground, connected to the wall on either side, is used together. Meters thick, it was so strong that even the strongest Grimm wouldn’t be able to break through.

“I can’t do this everywhere,” Harry said, pulling his hands away. But I think I can do it in enough places to keep the Grimm out for a while, or to at least funnel them to where we want them to be.”

Glynda nodded, cursing herself for a fool as she realized the full scope of Harry’s abilities and what it could do on a mission like this. *But to be fair, I have never seen him construct something this large or impressive before.* “Very well. Mr. Arc, you will come with me. Ms. Nikos, join your partner.... Downwind if you please.” The mud on Pyrrha was becoming more than a bit fragrant. “Ren, Nora, you will stay here, under Mr. Reinhart’s command for now. Come, Mr. Arc, Ms. Nikos.”

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It was fully dark out by the time that Harry and Pyrrha rejoined their teammates at the campsite that had been created for company black. Arturia had decided to use the ground floor of an apartment complex much like the one that Arturia had rented an apartment in Vale in. The building itself was mostly intact, with heavy metal shutters all over the windows that must’ve been closed during the various assaults that had taken Mountain Glenn. Clearing out the building and not been pleasant, but have been relatively straightforward despite the necessity of doing so without much light. Arturia had led that operation before heading to the outskirts of the city and the outer wall to meet with Glynda.

As they arrived, Arturia greeted them with a nod, then peremptorily gestured Harry into a chair, shaking her head with a frame frown. “If I had known that volunteering you to help raise defenses around the city would have taken so much out of you that you would be unable to even cook for us, I might have thought twice about it, Harry. As it is, sit there please, I will grab you some food in a moment.”

Harry nodded wearily, slumping down onto a sofa made of multiple cushions stacked up against the wall. Most of the furniture within the apartment complex hadn’t survived either the Grimm or the fight to reclaim it, but a few things have been moved into the base camp here the ground floor, replacing the furniture there previously. Next to him, Pyrrha sat, also slumping a little. She had taken to helping Harry by pulling out what metallic rubble she could so that Harry could use that as a base to create the portions of wall he’d had to replace, which made it somewhat easier, but using his magic to create what amounted to nearly a miles worth of wall had not been pleasant.

He grimaced a little smelling Pyrrha's hair for a second, shaking his head and he resolved to talk to her in a bit about solving that issue. *But first, food.*

The food was nothing special: the Remnant version of military rations, with a side of vegetable sticks and fruit. In the morning there would be protein bars. In the afternoon, energy drink based smoothies. Typical fare for hunters out and about, but Harry thought he could've done better even with the ingredients on hand.

The mood around the fireplace was subdued without being fearful, simply thoughtful and sad. Not a single individual there had not seen a skeleton that day, and the signs of how Mountain Glenn fell were disturbing.

As Harry ate, he thought about what he had seen, what he wished to tell Tia and Pyrrha later that night, and listened to Arturia as she, after making certain Harry had enough food and ruffling his hair for a bit, began to give out orders for the night. There would be one team on watch at all times at the camp, while another team, split into partner pairs, patrolled the area around the building. There were watches that night. That way, each team would take a turn on watch, and they would also be able to get some sleep. "This will further help you in the future, showing you the kind of sleep schedule that you will need to keep while out in the Grimm Lands with your team."

Seeing she had most of their attention, Arturia continued on explaining what would happen tomorrow. "The second day of the Remembrance is normally easier than the first. You will still need to be on the lookout for Nevermore of course, more of them will be flying in over the city from the forest beyond so long as we remain here. But if we did a good enough job clearing out the city of Grimm today, you shouldn't need to face any ground-based Grimm. If you have not laid all of your markers, do so tomorrow. If you wish to take more pictures, do so tomorrow. But do not, for whatever reason miss a call-in. You never know with Grimm, and those call-ins are part of our normal operations for a reason. Miss one, for a nonsensical reason and you might find yourself kicked out of Beacon when we return."

About an hour later while others were busy cleaning up or doing maintenance things around the camp, Harry gestured with one hand towards where Tia had been leaning against the wall, listening to her team leader Sarah explain how she wanted their team to patrol when it came their turn. They would be going last, and thus would be getting what amounted to the most sleep in one go, but they would also be responsible for being the first to head out and away from the base camp towards the outer wall to make certain that nothing had disturbed the defenses there.

Tia noticed, nodded, and seeing as her team leader was nearly finished, joined Harry after acknowledging that she had understood what was being said. She looked at Harry quizzically, as he pulled Pyrrha to her feet, ignoring her little mock groan of protest. Given that Pyrrha was almost as much of an endurance monster as Harry was an Aura monster, the day's combat really

hadn't pushed her all that much. "I have something to show you two, which I think you will be very happy for."

He then reached into his bag, and pulled out a small bar of soap from their camping supplies. Both girls' eyes widened at that, and they followed him out of the base camp quickly. Arturia watched them go, but shrugged her shoulders when Harry glanced her way, tapping his headset with one hand, indicating that he would still be in communication. Since there was no rule about people leaving the base camp if they weren't on patrol, and it was still only around nine thirty local time, Arturia did not make a big deal about it, wondering what Harry was going to show his two other lovers.

That made Arturia think about their overall situation there, and the possibilities of what Harry might be up to with two of his lovers at one time. *While the idea of seeing Tia in a sexual nature is unthinkable, I suppose Tia and Pyrrha might see one another in that fashion.* The idea didn't appeal to Arturia very much, but given how long she had wondered if Tia was simply completely asexual, she had no ideas about Tia's orientation or interests. *She could be bisexual for all I know. I just hope that if that is the case, Harry Tia and Pyrrha won't push me to join him and Pyrrha as well. While I believe that Pyrrha is an incredibly beautiful woman, I have no interest whatsoever in that direction.*

Similar thoughts were going through Pyrrha's mind, as well as wondering where Harry was leading them. The sight of the soap in Harry's hand was telling though, and she wondered if he had found a building that had its own water supply or something. *But wouldn't even that kind of plumbing need electricity in some fashion?* Pyrrha didn't know anything about plumbing or anything of that nature, so she had no idea how it worked.

Next to her, Tia also wondered where Harry was taking them, but she was more than content to let him lead her on. Tia trusted Harry so much it didn't even occur to her to question him.

They followed him underneath a collapsed portion of one massive building that had fallen across the street to collapse onto another, creating a partially covered diagonal zone directly underneath it. A little ways in, they found what looked almost like an oasis, although instead of being in the desert, here it was in the urban jungle of Mountain Glenn: a wide pool of water, it's sides leaking out into small streams that fed out into the street below beyond. All around it, hidden underneath a partially collapsed building that had fallen against its fellow on the other side of the street, the opposite side completely filled with rubble, were vines and green growing things, providing an exceptionally stark contrast even at night to most of the gray of the city.

"I don't know where the water is coming from, but I passed it through one of our water bottles earlier today when I saw it when Ren and I were on the other side of this place." Harry gestured and the pair of them saw a small opening near the bottom of the rubble, barely visible in the light of a flashlight Tia held in one hand. Up to this point they had moved under Harry's spells without the need of the light, but in here, the light was necessary. "I heard the sound of water, and thought it might be an enemy, but it was this instead."

The water bottles the students of beacon had been given were special, having small tabs at the bottom that could heat the water within to kill off any germs, as well as a small sensor that could detect anything toxic and activate the heating tab if needed, or would glow red if something like lead or other metals were detected within the water. If the bottle had said this water was clean, that was good enough for both girls.

Tia leaned over, pulling down the zipper to her outfit before giving Harry a long, very thorough kiss. Then, as he was left gasping, she plucked the soap from his unresisting hand as she moved towards the water, shedding her outfit as she went, completely unashamed of who might be watching.

Pyrrha dithered for a moment, then quickly grabbed Harry's head in both of her hands leaning into a kiss of her own. This went on for some time, and she eventually only pulled back due to the need to breathe. "Thank you, Harry! I am prepared to put up with much if I have to, but getting this mud gunk out of my hair is a welcome surprise."

"Just keep rewarding me with kisses like that, and I'll make sure you never have to be worried of being dirty again, unless..." Harry smirked leaning in to give her a quick kiss on the cheek, before pushing Pyrrha towards the water. "That is, you want to get a little dirty with me."

Pyrrha laughed, and quickly began to strip off her huntress outfit, while Harry watched the two of them, leaning against a piece of moss covered rock and watching the entryway for any possible trouble with half of his attention. This was not easy. Giving half of his attention to anything beyond two of his three lovers, as they finished stripping off was near impossible, and he stared unashamedly at Tia and Pyrrha for a few moments.

Their bodies were a marked study in contrasts. Pyrrha was lithe, a sprinter's body with a slightly heavier chest than normal for that type, B-cup breasts that Harry knew from experience fit very nicely into his hands, with a pert rear he loved to fondle, powerful but thin thighs, and long legs for her frame. Pyrrha's bright, scarlet colored hair fell down her shoulders and nearly to her waist once let loose from its tiara, and her emerald eyes sparkled from the light of a flashlight that Tia had brought along.

Now stuck in a small crevice nearby the light went straight down onto the pool, reflecting off the water and giving the entire scene an even more bizarre, almost otherworldly feel. *So much beauty at the center of so much ancient destruction*, Harry mused. Pyrrha entered slowly, testing the water as she went, wincing at the chill of it, her nipples noticeably hardening, and for the first time since Harry seen them, not in arousal either. *Pity*.

Tia on the other hand was noticeably wider in the shoulders and back and waist than Pyrrha. Her body was that of a discus thrower maybe, not quite a pure weightlifter as she didn't have the mass of muscles for the type, but her muscles were more sharply defined than Pyrrha's on her arms and in her waist and back. Her breasts too were larger by a good degree, drooping just

a bit with their own weight, so large that they spilled out over Harry's hands the one time they had gone that far.

Her tan skin was also a marked contrast to Pyrrha's nearly pale complexion, and Tia's short hair didn't quite reflect the light of the flashlight as much as Pyrrha's. Her rear was also a little larger, her thighs more powerful on shorter legs, and instead of dipping her toe in and then slowly easing into the water, Tia strode into it, uncaring of the chill even as it caused her nipples to harden as it had Pyrrha a second ago. She also did not relinquish her weapon by the edge of the water as Pyrrha had, holding Tiburon down so that its tip slowly slid into the water alongside her. Since it was treated to work with water and not a mecha-shift weapon, it could handle being submerged easily.

The water was surprisingly deep, almost up to Tia's waist before she got to the center of the pool, still staring down into it, wary of underwater Grimm. They did exist after all, although not often in bodies of water like this, or springs out in nature. Rivers, oceans, ponds, yes. Springs, no. It seemed as if underground Grimm and underwater Grimm were mutually exclusive things, but Tia was taking no chances.

Pyrrha was soon equal with Tia in the water, although she had paused occasionally to stretch and give Harry a show. He was still fighting with himself to keep his attention on watching the entrance they had come through for trouble.

Seeing that now as she turned, Tia also joined in. She crouched down into the water, using the soap on her upper body for a bit, before tossing it upwards, causing Pyrrha to step back a step and grab it in both hands, mindful of not letting it squirt out. Tia then lay back in the water, keeping one hand on Tiburon at the same time just in case, but letting her body just float for a moment in the shallow water still watching Pyrrha.

She watched as Pyrrha began to soap her body, then her hair. Body soap wasn't really very good at cleaning hair, but was better than nothing. For a moment, as Pyrrha ducked down, her body was invisible underneath the water, her hair a halo spreading out over the top of the water as Pyrrha's hands went to work on it. A few moments later, Pyrrha rose again, her hands still twining through her hair, pulling it pushing away from her face, then over her scalp, humming in delight at no longer feeling any clumps of dried mud within, the mud having been pulled free within the water.

She stood in the water, and Tia slowly pushed herself upright, not realizing how erotic both of them were at the moment with the water cascading down their bodies, but enjoying the feel of Harry's eyes on them when he glanced in their direction. It made Tia want to put on a little show, and maybe that was why she decided to do what she did next. After clearing the last of the water from her eyes and face, Tia came up behind Pyrrha, putting her arms around the other girl's stomach, her hands then caressing upwards until they were holding the redhead's chest. "MM... Nice."

Pyrrha stared down, then looked over her shoulder at the other girl, a blush rising to her face as she saw how close the other girl's face was. "What, what are you doing, Tia?"

"They're not quite as big as my sister's, but are just as firm and pointy. And your skin is really soft." Tia said, humming in thought as if she was examining Pyrrha.

"Your skin is quite soft too you know," Pyrrha said, reaching backward, caressing Tia's face, the blush on her own increasing as Tia stared back at her. Tia's face wore its normal composed, semi-unemotional expression, but those eyes and the slight uptick of her mouth to one side? Those told Pyrrha a lot more now than they had when they'd first met in person upon arriving in beacon. She could sense that Tia was experimenting, and wanted to see if Pyrrha was willing to do the same. She cocked her head to one side, inviting Pyrrha to take the next step.

Remembering her earlier thoughts on that score, and knowing that she also found Tia attractive, Pyrrha took that step. Pyrrha turned around in Tia's arms, causing Tia's hands on her chest fell away from Pyrrha's chest as her arms went around Pyrrha's waist. Pyrrha did the same, one arm remaining there while the other hand trailed up Tia's back to her neck where she began to play with Tia's short hair. Then she leaned in, her own head canted just right, their lips meeting.

For a moment, they simply pressed against one another, their bodies practically molded into one another, hardened nipples pressing into soft flesh, their lips pressing, twitching, caressing. Then, Pyrrha opened her mouth, and her tongue licked out for a second, tapping gently against Tia's mouth, which was already opening in response.

Pyrrha closed her eyes as did Tia, and they began to make out in earnest. It was different, interesting, and fun, although both decided that, while nice enough to continue, it wasn't the same as kissing Harry.

Nearby, Harry watched on, completely stunned, and thinking that if he was back in his old world, what he was seeing now would have allowed him to create an island-sized Patronus. *Or the lust version of it anyway.*

However, this was real life, and this was real life on Remnant in the Grimm Lands. As such, even as Tia began to pull out of the kiss, her hands trailing down Pyrrha's back to give her rear an experimental squeeze, Harry quickly turned around at a noise near the entryway. There, a few Creepers that had been missed earlier in the day appeared, their eyes gleaming red in the darkness.

A quick Lumos had them squealing, ducking down trying to hide their eyes from the light. With no arms, that was somewhat hard.

Before Harry could finish them off, two shots rang out from Pyrrha's rifle.

Harry turned back to the two girls, and saw Pyrrha standing at the edge of the pool having somehow crossed the distance between the center of the pool and the side within seconds. She stood now, completely bear, her small thatch of pubic hair catching his attention for a second as

she stood there, chest heaving, Milo in rifle mode in one hand, her shield on her other arm, prepared to do battle despite her nakedness, which only served to highlight it more.

“Magnificent...” Harry murmured, simply staring at her, watching as Tia behind her joined her quickly, Tiburon still in one hand.

For some reason that word caused Pyrrha to blush even more than Tia’s actions earlier had, and she looked down at her feet a little sheepishly. She didn’t hear Tia’s hum of agreement, only felt the other girl hug her from behind again, before moving around Pyrrha towards their clothing. “That was fun. Not as fun as kissing Harry, but nice. We still shouldn’t stay here for long.”

“True. See if you can get that gunk off of your clothing you too, and then we’ll head back to camp,” Harry ordered, shaking his head and moving towards the entryway to stand guard there instead of nearby where he ran the risk of getting distracted again.

Soon, the two girls joined him, and moving to either side of Harry, they leaned in, giving him kisses on the neck, ear and cheek before taking turns kissing him very thoroughly on the mouth, whispering their thanks for allowing them a chance to get clean. Then, arm in arm, with the light of Tia’s flashlight lighting their way and Harry’s spells covering them, they made their way back to the camp, all three in a far more cheerful frame of mind than they had been when they left.

OOOOOOO

As the next morning began, it felt as if the day would be much like the day before, although with far less combat. The five companies of Huntsmen had done an exceptional job of clearing most of the Grimm out of the city the day before and through the night. And thanks to Glynda and Harry, their defensive positions were strong, easily able to hold against the Nevermore that continued to slowly rebuild their numbers over the city as more flocks moved into the territory from beyond the outer wall.

However, that did not last. Because one specific group of Grimm were not in the city at the time they landed, but appeared as if the city was within their territory regardless, trooping down the strange, flattened area of the forest that Glynda had seen and been worried about the night before.

Ruby was on watch in the semi-repaired tower that team Ruby had cleared out the day before. It was near the outer wall of Mountain Glenn within the command zone of Company Black, and made for a great place to watch the forest surrounding the city. Since everyone knew it was only a matter of time before the Grimm in the surrounding territory began to slowly follow the Nevermore in investigating where their fellows had gone.

This was how, at eleven in the morning, diminutive reaper became the first one to see the problem coming. “Oh my gosh! I didn’t know Grimm came in extra extra extra-large! What the

heck is that thing?" She whispered, awed as she stared through the scope of her sniper rifle towards a line of massive Grimm slowly moving out of the forest beyond the outer wall.

There was a line of them in single file, each one following the one in front of it. They looked like elephants almost, but much, **much** bigger than any elephant Ruby had ever seen in a zoo. She estimated their size as at least four stories tall, maybe as many as six, almost as tall as the outer wall of the city. They had huge trunks, massive tusks, and a lot of Grimm armor covering their bodies from snout to tail. They moved slowly, ponderously, but Ruby figured that that probably meant they hit like a freight train.

And, Ruby realized a second later, they were not moving to move around the city. No, they are moving towards it at what looked like a diagonal from Ruby's current position. "Oh crud. Does that mean they routinely march through here or something? Dang it, I've never really read about elephants or anything." It belatedly came to her that she should probably be calling this in, and she had said and tapped on it for a second. "Hey team, I've got an unknown Grimm moving out of the forest. A whole herd of them, and they look as if they're moving to the city. Not our territory, but they'll hit one of the other command zones to our far right. Should I call it in?"

Before any of her team members could respond, Arturia's voice came in crisply. "Yes, you should Ruby, and while I realize you are freshman, you should have learned by now how to shift frequencies. Now, tell me more about this Grimm."

Moments later, Arturia was standing next to the younger girl, along with a scowling looking Glenda. "Goliaths, blast it. I was concerned about that run I saw last night, but there actually being a full herd of Goliaths within merely a week's travel from Vale... I know they are no true threat to the city but even so, why did I not see a report about them." *If I knew about them, I would have insisted only seniors come on the Remembrance this time*, Glynda thought, scowling in anger.

Actually, she had been informed by Ozpin about them. But she had forgotten, or rather, Ozpin had subtly directed her mind away from the fact he had shared a rumor about their existence before when speaking about Salem's activities. Ozpin had made the decision to let the various grades take part in the Remembrance, wanting to see Harry Arc in action some more, and to use the youth as a canary in the coal mine. And as such, he subtly shifted Glynda's attention away from a piece of information that would indeed have changed their plans for the Remembrance.

Ruby frowned, having never heard of the name of the Grimm either, not even from her uncle Crow, something that astonished her now that she came to think of it, and worried about how annoyed their teacher sounded. Arturia also sounded very annoyed as she spoke up, shaking her head. "Goliaths aren't the kind to make trouble unless you literally run into them, and they routinely stay well away from the city states. I would wager that the Vale defense drones saw them, but didn't realize what kind of a threat they could be given their normal day-today speed

and their shapes. And now here we are, having blocked their path forward along one of their runs.”

The run that Glynda had been worried about the night before went straight into and through one of the holes in the outer wall made during Mountain Glenn’s collapse. And now that hole had been filled by Harry’s transfigured wall.

“Um, are they really that dangerous? Should we take the fight to then maybe?”

“And leave our defensive position here?” Glynda shook her head. “Besides, the majority of your weapons would do nothing to those creatures. Indeed, only two of your fellow students, both seniors, carry weapons that could penetrate or break a Goliath’s armor.” *Perhaps Mr. Arc’s sword could penetrate it, but that is a large maybe.*

You will learn about them in your third year Miss Rose, as only seniors are supposed to be able to take on even one of the creatures let alone a full herd of them. Myself, the other professors, and Arturia could take on that herd for certain, but that would leave the rest of you without clear leadership. Something I am not willing to do, as such a battle will no doubt bring down every Grimm in for hundreds of miles down on top of us.”

The other team leaders from Company Black showed up at that point, and Arturia quickly filled them in, still looking to Glynda for her instructions.

Harry though had a suggestion, holding up a hand. “We all know that a lot of Grimm take on properties of the animal they look like. So I don’t doubt those creatures are really dangerous on the charge. But people who hunt elephants didn’t routinely hunt them with just guns or even spears back before dust was discovered. They used traps. Specifically, pits, pits placed in the line of the animals’ advance. We won’t even need to be in the area. And from what I remember, if we kill one of them, the other Goliaths, if they act like the elephants they ape, will turn and make a new trail well away from the original.”

“And if we set enough traps, we can lead them away from the city out to our flank,” Joachim said nodding firmly in agreement. “And you’ve got an earth manipulation semblance right?”

Harry nodded, and Arturia and Glynda quickly hammered out a plan. Arturia and Harry would go forward into the forest, with Arturia providing cover for Harry as he would use his earth manipulation semblance to create a series of pits and ditches in the way of the pachyderm-like Grimm, hoping to lead them away from the city.

OOOOOO

Salem had not been aware of the Remembrance; nor actually had any Seers watching Mountain Glenn or anywhere else in particular beyond Beacon. While Mountain Glenn was important as a hideout for the White Fang and thus hit her little Queen’s plans for Vale, they didn’t matter overmuch to Salem herself.

But Glynda Goodwitch was a different story. She had ordered one of the many Seers she had watching Beacon from afar to follow the bullheads because one of them had seen Glynda going into one of the bullheads to leading this large team of huntsman in training.

Not only was Glynda a strategic target, Salem had a particular grudge against Glynda. To Salem, the blonde woman was a pale, sickly replacement of her pre-Shattering self. They looked very alike, and even their powers were somewhat similar. Salem thought it the most horrible mockery that Ozpin had brought such a woman into his confidence.

Initially, she had been content to just watch. But now, with the chance the Goliaths had given her, Salem decided to act.

“Let us see how this group of Huntsman deal with a real threat...” Salem murmured.

At her command the Seer pulled back. A moment later, it disappeared into the foliage of the forest, going in search of a specific kind of Grimm. The Goliaths were not intelligent enough for what Salem had in mind, but somewhere in this forest Salem hoped to find a Grimm that could act as a general for the other Grimm.

She found one, but by then, the creature was already on the move, the sound of combat in the distance having begun to draw more Grimm towards the city. Something that pleased Salem immensely. The Seer did not need to merge with the ancient Grimm to get it moving, and thus Salem was able to send it back into the city to observe things as best it could. **I believe this is a case of having my cake and eating it too,** the dread queen of the Grimm thought, chuckling darkly.

OOOOOOO

As Salem was sending her Seer off to find a local s-class Grimm, Harry and his sister scaled down Mountain Glenn’s defensive wall nearest the point where the elephant run reached the wall. From there, they pushed through the trees that had grown up, pushing up to the outer wall.

From above, they are now almost invisible, and Arturia smiled faintly, having a plan to use that in a moment watching while Harry silenced his feet and hers, before indicating he was ready to move.

Not five moments later, now completely invisible to those on the wall or even in the towers, Arturia enacted her own little plan. A second later, Arturia pushed Harry against the nearest tree, kissing him ardently. “You,” she hissed between kisses, “have no idea how long I wanted to do that!” *kiss* “Seeing you and Pyrrha last night leaning against one another and being so giggly, I so wanted to join in! But not only” *kiss*, “would it be highly inappropriate, but we’re trying to keep our relationship a secret.” *kiss* “I did not realize how annoying that would be until last night.”

Harry chortled that, kissing her back just as hungrily, actually letting his hands fall down to her rear, beginning to knead and pull Arturia into him, amused as always that his older sister was

shorter than he was. "That just means I will have more to make up for in the future. Something I look forward to most heartily..."

The two of them made out for a few seconds, then Arturia pulled away, shaking her head as reality reasserted itself. "I will take that as a down payment on that Harry, but come. Let us be about this quickly."

With no one around to hide his full abilities from, Harry quickly dug a pit directly in the center of the elephant run, the beaten-down, smashed through area that the Goliaths had made previous times when they had passed through the city. At Arturia's suggestion, Harry made a hole about as wide as a Goliath was long, but only about a story and a half deep. But he lined the bottom with sharp, jagged metal bits, spears and spikes of various size.

While he was doing that, Pyrrha had gathered fallen tree branches. The moment that he was done, Harry transfigured those dead branches into what amounted to a large wicker wall, laying it on the ground. The pair quickly covered it with leaves and other detritus to make it look like just a normal part of the trail. They were very diligent about this, as Grimm were occasionally far more intelligent than the animal they were made to look like, and elephants weren't exactly the dimmest creatures in creation either. They would be certain to notice something if they left any hints behind.

Thirty minutes, they are ready, the distant noises of the Goliaths letting out low rumbles and bellows to one another reach their ears. It was then Harry realize there might be a problem. "Scent! Do Goliaths have a good sense of smell? I can't remember if elephants do or not."

"They do not, in point of fact, their eyesight is actually much better than an elephants. It is why they routinely cause just as much damage hurling things at long range as they do stomping around" Arturia said, tugging him along. "Now come! We need to get away. And then we will need to make some more of these traps out in the woods."

"Or a chasm or something," Harry agreed. "I don't think we'll have time to hide the next few," Harry agreed.

The two of them raced off, not even bothering to stay around to see if their first pit would work. Harry followed Arturia, knowing she would be able to choose a better spot to put down another pit trap than he would.

They were nearly a thousand yards away through the woods before they stopped and Harry began his work once more. But they still heard the elephantine squawk of outrage as the first Goliath of the herd fell into the pit as both legs couldn't find purchase suddenly, plunging the Goliath headfirst down into the ditch. The sharpened metal bits there did little, the Goliath's armor sneering at them except for one which impacted one of the Grimm eyes, blinding it and causing it to flail around in the pit with even more pain and fury than before.

But the pit was deep enough that even its back legs couldn't find purchase enough to pull it back out, and it was stuck there. None of its bones were broken, but it was well and truly stuck.

It was at this point that the Goliaths proved that they were not at all like elephants to those watching from the city.

When a trap was laid on an elephant run, the entire herd would leave the run, smashing their way through the forest to create a new one, as if the original run had proven to be too dangerous for them by some act of nature. The Goliaths on the other hand, seemed to somehow understand that it might only be that one pit.

The Goliath now at the head of the column roared a challenge, bellowing so loudly that even from where they were Arturia and Harry winced at the noise in a way the loud pained bellow of the first had not made them do. The Goliath then turned, smashing a tree down with an almost lazy flick of its prehensile nose, before crashing into another with another head flick, spearing it through with one of its horns and tearing it out of the earth with a single jerk of its head. A boulder was similarly smashed, the elephantine nose coming down like a steel girder or a wrecking ball. Then it was moving on, the next two shifting to the sides to widen the run as they went, while the first led the way to create a loop, a tiny offshoot of the original run, heading back into the run on the other side of the pit.

What followed was even more surprising, and those like Ruby who could see the action via their sniper scopes stared or whistled in astonishment, while the red-themed sniper gaped. "I've never seen that before! Grimm helping Grimm, that's so weird!"

Glenda also scowled hearing that, shaking her head. "Fighting an entire herd of Goliaths is something that is best avoided, and we have few records of it. I suppose we should not be so surprised if they act in ways we do not expect. But this has made any attempt to divert them harder."

Ruby didn't answer, simply staring as four more Goliaths moved forward, not following the herd as it moved around the obstacle to rejoin the three trailblazers on the other side of the pit. Instead, these four move forward, leaning down and using their long snouts to grab at the back of the legs of the original leader of the herd. The four heaved, and kept on heaving until they were able to pull the creature halfway out, whereupon it used its back legs to try to push itself as well, while the four other elephants gripped its center, and slowly began to pull it out as best they could.

She kept on watching that, simply shocked at the sight of Grimm working together like that, until a growl from Glenda roused her to the very real danger. "The Goliaths are still heading towards the city, and... they are speeding up. Botheration."

From the distant Goliaths came a loud ululating bellow, almost a chorus as they picked up speed, charging down the elephant run towards the city as if they knew that they had been attacked from people within. And as they trumpeted and bellowed, the Grimm of the forest

beyond Mountain Glenn all around the city woke up to the fact humans were once more in their midst. Soon, many thousands of Grimm found their feet and wings taking them towards the site of their now-ancient victory.

“Ms. Rose, remain here with your team. Company Black, remain in position until Arturia returns. All other companies are to go to high alert. The Grimm are coming, and in numbers we might not have expected.”

With that, Glynda leaped out of the tower, flying via her Semblance towards the area of the city the Goliaths were making for.

Yang and the others all looked after Glynda. “Yeesh, Goodwitch can book it when she wants, can’t she? I suppose we should have known after seeing the evidence of her spars with Harry, but still.” Those spars had been the talk of the freshman class for a while, although none had seen them in person. The shattered, blasted segments of the forest had been more than enough to get tongues wagging.

“Xiao Long, I cannot begin to tell you how proud I am you didn’t make a pun then,” Weiss said, some of her normal snark appearing for the first time since they had arrived in the city. All of them had been kind of subdued, seeing the remains of Mountain Glenn’s collapse, and the number of people that had been left behind, but Weiss most of all after the team had laid out their small bundle of memory flowers. “Now is not the time.”

“Nope. Time for punching and blasting. Just remember that some of these Grimm might be the same who overran this city in the first place, girls,” Yang said seriously. “I don’t know about you, but I’m looking for some payback.”

“And killing a lot of Grimm is always a good thing,” Ruby chirped.

Several blocks away from Team RWBY by that point, Glynda raced along, for several more minutes until she was facing the oncoming Goliaths. This was in Professor Port’s command zone, and he had already moved to the wall as well, standing on top of one of the still-standing segments of the wall as Port stared towards the incoming multi ton mass of Grimm.

Port cocked his head towards Glynda as she landed, smacking his fists together, and then pulling his blunderbuss off of his shoulder. “Well now, this could be fascinating! I can count the number of times a herd of Goliaths have been sited on one hand with at least one finger left over. What about you, Glynda?”

“I can do the same, and one thing all those instances have in common: they were all disasters!” Glenda hissed tartly, keeping her voice down so those around them could not hear her. And not just because she didn’t want to spread worry or concern. “I am going to find out who was watching the spy drones for this territory, and I am going to give them a dust-assisted rectal exam.”

Professor Port winced, but said nothing. Drones could only pick up so much, and it fell to the individual on the other side of the video drone to pick out what was really important. It was a job mostly given to clerks or previous students of Beacon who had been dropped out of the program for one reason or another. It was a thankless task, and a low-paying one. There was a reason why organized crime was still a thing even between the city states, after all. Such people were easily bribed, and so were the people on the lookout for such or who saw their reports before they were passed up the chain to someone like Ozpin.

Regardless of how these particular Goliaths had been missed, however, they were now a problem. Moving faster than the elephants they looked like the lead Grimm was almost to the city now.

Glynda flicked her riding crop, and the lead pachyderm suddenly stopped moving. She grimaced for second, having had to absorb all of its forward momentum, which was harder at ranges like this. Then she twitched her riding crop to the side, sending the Goliath through the air to land on a piece of jagged metal that stuck out from the rest of the forest, possibly a large bullhead that had crashed there during the evacuation. It struck with enough force to drive the creature down onto the metal, puncturing its armor with a loud cracking noise heard back on the wall. The thing was still alive, amazingly, but stuck on the metal it would have a devil of a time getting back onto its own feet.

“Excellent job Glynda! I’ll take the next one, and may be able to stop the rest from charging the city once they see my prowess!” With that, Port leaped off of the wall, landing with about as much force as the Goliath that Glynda had thrown, creating a crater in the ground before he charged forwards, bellowing a war cry.

His semblance, Juggernaut, roiled under his skin, making Peter even stronger, even denser than the large pachyderms. Charging forward, he slammed into and pushed the next Goliath back, before grabbing onto its prehensile nose before it could do the same with him. Even as the grim tried to lift Port into the air, Peter dug in his feet, and then grunted as he twisted his body, slamming the Grimm down onto its side onto the ground, whereupon he pulled his blunderaxe off of his shoulder again, stuffing it into the creature’s mouth and pulling the trigger.

He was smashed in the side by the next Grimm, but Port simply laughed even as he rolled along on the ground. Even his weight, which was added to by his semblance, hadn’t been enough to let him retain his feet against the blow of that nature. But the creature that struck him found itself hurled through the air back over the heads of its fellows to land somewhere almost out of sight from the wall by Glenda.

At that point the rest of the herd moved to engage the Hunters. Two of the other Goliaths peeled off to fight Port, while several raced along the elephant run towards the city. However, not all of them did. A portion of the herd stayed where they were, spreading out along the run. Instead of closing, they wrapped their noses around tree trunks pulling them out of the ground with ease, whereupon they started to hurl them towards the distant city.

Astonishingly to many of the watchers, most of those tree trunks and boulders were able to reach the outer wall despite being tossed from beyond sniper range. The thrown debris smashed into the outer wall, creating still more holes in it in various places, completely negating within a few moments all of Harry's efforts the day before to repair it.

These new holes were spread across three of the company command zones, and instantly the professors in charge of those areas, including Arturia who had quickly returned with Harry, took command. They pulled a few of the teams back from the actual wall into the towers within the city, and put into action several of the plans they had thought up the days before. Kill zones were quickly mapped out, as the huntsman in training waited for the Goliaths to close and enter the city, where they would be more vulnerable to being surrounded.

Harry in particular found himself well away from the outer wall and using his magic once more to create ditches, pits, and walls. None of them were covered, of course. There was no way to mark where they were on the map, and even if there had been, moving around a city that had just turned into a battlefield was not a good idea.

"Glynda, this is Oobleck, do you require assistance? Several of my teams are chomping at the bit to move to your position and help reinforce the defenses there."

The history professor's tone gave his own thoughts on that score very obvious, and Glenda was quick to reinforce that. "Negative! Do not reinforce us. All companies, stay at your positions! These are Grimm. The Goliaths might not be aggressive, but they all are S-class and other Grimm will follow their lead. That means a general attack on the city might occur at any moment. I repeat, stay at your positions."

One hand manipulated her scroll, which was connected to her com bead and allowed her to switch frequencies. The next time she spoke, it was on every team leader's channel, repeating her earlier orders and bluntly stating that if any of them thought of leaving to help the areas of the city already being attacked, she would see they were expelled for gross incompetence. "And all teams had also best have assigned someone anti-air duty or be under cover."

Within moments, her words proved prophetic. Thousands of Nevermore flew into the sky all around the city, flocking forward and one giant mass coming down all over the city.

Everyone assigned on overwatch opened fire, and soon the entire city rang with the sounds of gunfire and the shrieking of Nevermore. The companies had done such a good job of clearing out most of the city that only a hundred more Grimm made their presence known scattered across the city. And they did so too quickly for anymore land-based Grimm to come to their help. The rest of team Anvil, and Team Argent dealt with more than a dozen such Grimm in their territory, and then went back to preparing one of the four kill zones that Arturia, Harry, and Timothy between them had worked out the day before.

Elsewhere, the other freshman teams, senior teams and junior teams all had a similarly easy time of it at first. But then, the team assigned to the wall portion of company Red's zone all turned as one of their own, Ritz Glittergold, screamed. "FUCKING hell, it's got me!"

They were just in time to grab the girl's arms before she could be pulled off of the outer wall of the tower they were in by a Beowulf alpha, which had scaled the wall unseen. The team killed it, but behind it came dozens more monkey like Grimm, flowing forward in a mass. Most flowed into the city by the shattered segments of the wall, while others climbed up the

"Retreat, fucking hell, pull back out of the tower!" Tomas Olive shouted. "Pull back and down! Let's get them bunched up inside, then we'll see."

OOOOOOO

Soon reports of such attacks from all over the city began to come in, so much so that Arturia and the other company commanders had to shout the various team leaders down, forcing them to stop shouting themselves, and to report more calmly. The freshmen in particular were having issues staying calm and professional in the face of how quickly things had changed, and the sheer number of Grimm that had suddenly appeared out of the forest.

Meanwhile, Ren, Blake, Ruby, and the others who could more easily engage aerial opponents had already begun to fire into the Nevermore coming down towards them. In reality, it was the Nevermore who were more of a problem right now, making any open movement difficult, and there were a lot of them.

"Team Anvil, stay on station where you are." Arturia said calmly. She had reached team Ruby in the outer tower and was now staring to where the herd of Goliaths had split off. The group that had initially remained behind to toss debris further were now making their way towards the city, smashing everything in their path as they did, hurling trees and stones ahead of them at the city wall in various places. And around their feet and out into the jungle around, hundreds of smaller Grimm could be seen moving.

Nearby, Ruby, Blake, and even Weiss were firing up around the battered roof of the tower to the aerial opponents above as best they could. Yang was pacing, growling angrily and slamming her fists together with every step, irritated that her weapons really didn't have the range needed against aerial opponents unless they got far too close for comfort. Which one Nevermore did as Arturia watched, landing on the windowsill and poking his head straight down towards Weiss, who had moved back to refill Myrtenaster's dust. The creature was still slowed by her latest glyph however, and barely had time to land before Yang was in its face. A punch crashed into the Nevermore's jaw, shattering beak and skull alike as it was hurled off of the tower.

"Time to go ladies," Arturia said crisply. "Make your way down to the street level. I will meet you there shortly."

Ruby might well have argued, but her sister grabbed her by the arm and let her off, hissing, “You don’t argue with the girl in charge! Besides, given what we saw of Arturia and Pyrrha’s fight, I don’t want to be anywhere within the blast radius.”

“Smart girl.” Arturia murmured. Then she turned back and faced out into the forest, particularly towards where the Goliaths were making their way straight toward her company’s area of control. “Split the heavens and rend the Earth! Shine, Excalibur!”

Thrusting out Rhongomyniad, Arturia directed the beam forward, the ravaging beam of power slugging the top of the wall and continuing on to sear both forest and Grimm alike. Both of the enemy Grimm charging Company Black’s segment of the city wall were enveloped in the blast, but as she had feared, her attack didn’t penetrate. The area around them and the dozens of Grimm underneath had all been turned to ash. But the two Goliaths, although looking as if they had been stuck in a furnace, slowly push themselves to their feet.

One, the same one that had lost its eye to the original pit trap took a few steps forward, then collapsed, slowly turning into dust as the damage it’d taken to the eye and through that wound its brain finally caught up to it. But the other kept on moving even as chunks of its armor began to flake off, the heat of Arturia’s assault enough to turn the bone-like armor to ash.

Then she spotted several giant Nevermore flying towards the city, and smiled thinly, lashing out with another attack through Rhongomyniad to finish off the wounded Goliath. A smaller one this time.

This allowed the two giant Nevermore to close, lashing out towards the command tower with feathers. Those feathers punched into the concrete with ease, making the tower look like a feather-studded pin cushion.

But by that point, team Ruby was down on the ground. Ruby kept on firing up at the Nevermore already over the city, but they were moving away, and that was what Arturia wanted. As soon as one of the giant Nevermore reached her position, she shouted, “Thousand Thorns!” and stabbed Rhongomyniad into the ground of the tower.

All around the tower and out into city dozens of giant energy thorns appeared, thrusting outwards. The giant Nevermore who had just landed on the upper outer wall found itself skewered through its chest side and neck, and instantly began to turn into smoke and ash on the wind. The other giant Nevermore which had been about to land on the top of the tower was slightly luckier. It only lost a foot and quite a lot of tail feathers before it could flap its wings hurriedly and move away.

Right into a shot through the open mouth from Ruby, which put paid to it. “We had so much trouble with that one giant Nevermore in the initiation. I suppose it goes to show how far we’ve come,” Ruby murmured.

“We haven’t come far enough. Move!” Yang shouted, as another Nevermore dove down towards their position. Blake and Weiss had both been taking a moment to re-upload, and she cocked ember Celica waiting until it got close enough.

It died a second later as Arturia landed on its back briefly, stabbing downwards. She then rolled free, landing on her feet next to the group, looking at them with with one wintry eyebrow raised. “I believe I told you to get a move on, yes?”

Hastily the four huntresses in training moved along the streets, firing up at the Nevermore as they could, although finding most of their shots blocked by roof and building as they did. “We should be on the rooftops,” Ruby grumbled, firing up at a Nevermore. She was the only one scoring kills at this point, but she could hear fire and the sounds of battle all throughout the area around them, where other teams are doing just that.

Arturia shook her head firmly. “No. Crescent Rose is good at a distance for certain, but lacks the ability to fire quickly. Joachim’s team and both Apacci and Ren have faster guns, and while their range is not nearly as long as yours, it is long enough to make them more suited for aerial targets than those of your team. This is not going to be a quick or easy battle. Husband your strength and ammunition for now. More land-based Grimm will be along shortly.”

As if to prove her point, the outer wall that was almost out of sight shattered, and Ruby and Weiss both turned to stare as the metal reinforced concrete wall Harry had raised to block one of the previous holes in the wall began to shake from another blow. Then nearby, there was a booming noise as yet a third portion of the wall was smashed inward. The howls of Grimm came to them then, as the first of the land Grimm to enter Arturia’s area of responsibility came up at them.

“Yang, with me. Ruby, place the rest of your team where you will. Keep the range open ladies, and remember you are fighting in a city without any innocents around and no need to keep the noise down. If you feel the need to destroy a wall to bring down a dozen Grimm, be my guest so long as you don’t bring it down on yourself,” Arturia ordered, moving forward with Yang although she moved a step behind the other girl. “Yang, please express our displeasure at these gatecrashers as I contact the rest of our company.”

“Hell yeah! I knew I liked you for a reason, Dark Queen!” Yang grinned, and charged to meet the first group of Beowulf’s and creepers coming around the corner. Meanwhile, Arturia busied herself with firing over the blonde haired girl’s shoulders at a few Grimm with her gun shield, but mainly letting her take the fight to them for a second. She had the larger battle to coordinate, a difficult task in any city combat and more so like this against the Grimm.

OOOOOO

As Team Ruby pulled back from the tower, Harry finished putting the final touches on what amounted to a giant kill zone several blocks back and east of where the Grimm had begun to

flood into the city. The battle was not nearly as loud here as it was at the front, although even here guns fired continually all around Harry aimed towards the Nevermores.

He had blocked several significant portions of the street by having Tia, Nora and Mila pull destroyed cars and debris together, creating walls which he then fused into place, making them far stronger than they should be. At the same time, Sung-Sun and Apacci had begun to place small explosives, which Arturia had taken out of Beacon's stores for this battle. Not within the kill zone itself, but within the buildings and in a few of the walls. This way they would further drive the Grimm into the kill zone and cover the group's retreat.

Above, Pyrrha was being kept busy along with Ren, who occasionally called Mila away from her work down below on the streets to help stave off a particularly large flock of Nevermore. But elsewhere in the area, the skies were being kept clear relatively effectively by the other company members assigned on overwatch.

"How are you doing?" Harry said as he finished his last wall, looking up to where Pyrrha was perched in a window, firing upwards

"There are so many of them," Pyrrha said, her tone one of wonder rather than concern. "I would say we are doing all right Harry. Nevermore are not armored enough to really take a lot of damage and we haven't seen any Greater Nevermore entering our territory since Arturia dealt with those two near the outer wall. But I can tell there are still more Nevermore up there than there was a few moments ago, and there are a few other aerial Grimm joining them. Deathbills and others."

Deathbills were the oddly named Grimm that most looked like vultures. They were larger than Nevermore and slower, but could release... well... Grimm bird droppings really that acted like acid for a while until whatever was in the strange goop faded.

"Concentrate fire on any Deathbills or new flying types you see. The last thing we need is for the Grimm to have an actually effective air unit," Joachim ordered, having overheard that from nearby. While most of his team had weapons that could be turned on aerial opponents easily, Joachim was in much the same situation as Yang had been in the tower, keeping an eye out rather than actually actively fighting.

"Harry, how deep into the city have the Grimm gotten?" Sung-Sun asked via the team leader's frequency. She was having trouble keeping her attention split between the overall battle and their current task. She was currently out of sight, hiding up in one of the larger buildings. Apacci was somewhere near her, while Tia would be joining them soon. She and Mila would patrol the ground right up until it came time to use the

"About three blocks so far in our sector. Arturia has met up with Calico and team Ruby, and all of them are pulling back now. I don't know what's going on in the other sectors, but we don't seem to have much bleed over just yet."

“Understood. We’re in position here Harry. Leave that speaker there and get a move on,” Sung-Sun mock-ordered. “You’ve still got a few jobs to do.”

Harry nodded, then realizing he was still communicating only through voice, answered again in the affirmative, admonishing himself.

Joachim answered that he would relay that up to Arturia, as Harry left that position, and, with Nora next to him, raced down the streets, heading to the next area they had marked out as a potential kill zone. Soon Ren and Pyrrha joined them. Behind them, a small circular speaker hidden within one of the cars, began to make noise, the noise of dozens of running feet, accompanied by a few squeals of frightened humans or faunus. The noise would bring every Grimm who heard it running once they were able to make it out over the sound of the greater battle.

How do you stop a tsunami? A flood? The answer to that question would vary wildly, and will probably tell the questioner a good deal about the individual put on the spot like that. Because there was no one correct answer to that question. There were many ways to stop the tide. Even one that was intelligent like the Grimm.

But shooting it was definitely not a good answer. And that was the problem facing the groups of teens on anti-air patrol. There were just too many Nevermore coming in. Gatling guns, rifles, machine guns, even Ren’s hand-to-hand guns. All of them could down Nevermore in threes or fives, but when they came at you in their hundreds many of them would get through. Soon, Harry and the others on the ground were dealing with them, while the ground-based Grimm continued to push their way through the city.

The repaired segments of the wall and how many of the Goliaths had died outside the city hampered those efforts. It was only a matter of time before the outmost defenders had to retreat entirely, but Arturia and Team Ruby had given Harry time to help put together three more kill zones before having to race back to the second to engage the land-based Grimm as they surged deeper into the city.

The Grimm came on, flooding into the killing zone from dozens of alleyways and a few main streets. Creepers, Beowolves, Beowolf Alphas, Weblings and a monkey Grimm whose type Harry had not seen before. All of them were there, in one tremendous mass.

And they were still there when Tia, Sung-Sun, and the rest of the group assigned to that area opened fire. While Joachim’s team kept the Nevermore off them, Garnet and Anvil slaughtered the Grimm on the ground.

Their fire poured down, a tumult of bullets and dust, explosions and Dust assisted attacks slaughtering more than a hundred Grimm in the time it took to breathe. Tia’s attack with Tiburon, a watery cascade, tore apart Grimm by the dozens. Harry’s attacks lashed out with hundreds of conjured up fist-sized stones. Pyrrha launched hundreds of tiny metal needles at

speed that would put rounds from most of their weapons to shame while Nora's Grenades, Mila's missiles, and everyone else did as much damage as they could.

Yet still the Grimm came on. Filled with bloodlust towards the humans, any measure of animal intelligence or need to survive was gone, drowned by the need to come to grips with the bright shining lights that the humans represented in their red-tinted vision. They poured forward as the froth of the wave was slaughtered, snarling and howling as they tried to enter the buildings that have been barricaded against them, trying to come to grips with the defenders.

It did not work. Most of the first few stories of those buildings had been blasted into pieces or filled with debris. Even Beowolves or the monkey Grimm could not move fast over that terrain and with the defenders holding the high ground, the Grimm simply lacked any long-range firing ability to offset that which the humans had. But they kept on coming. And worse, Nevermore began to push through Team Jasper's fire.

Harry grimaced as he realized that and turned his attention in that direction after conjuring up more metal needles for Pyrrha. Raising his sword upward Harry used Caliburn to aim and sent out a torrent of fire, the fire washing over several dozen Nevermore while Pyrrha sent the needles down into the mass below.

That this gave away the fact his Semblance wasn't just Earth Manipulation to his classmates was lost on him, but there, he caught a break. None of the other team members around saw where those attacks came from. "Nora! Prepare for some **real** splash damage. Team Garnet, pull back and start fending off Nevermore."

Even as Nora yelled in jubilation and leapt out into the air, Harry reported to Arturia. "Arturia, we're going to have to pull back from the initial kill zone faster than we thought. The Nevermore have come down on top of us, there's not enough guns still trained into the kill zone to make it viable any longer."

"Affirmative Harry. I went to one side of you with team Tangerine. One of their fellows is down, a lucky blow to the knee sent her leg into a hole in the roof. She'll be fine with some help, but we're going to pull back deeper into the city to the second kill point. We'll have it set up by the time you arrive. You're to move around us and deeper into the city," Arturia said, before barking out several more orders, cool and controlled as always.

Harry smiled at that observation even as he turned his attention to the battle in front of him, watching Nora slam into the Grimm about to reach the top of one of the walls that he had set up down below. Electricity coursed off the Valkyrie, the girl having pulled out one of her batteries and draining it of energy to give herself strength. Magnhild flew around, creating a wide open area around her, even the shaft hitting with enough power to pulp Grimm, into which Harry led the rest of his team down onto the streets below. The rest of the two teams, Garnet and Jasper assigned to the kill zone followed after.

Harry stood with Pyrrha to one side of him, firing to either side of Nora as Ren kept the Nevermore off of the area for a moment with his guns, shaking his head with a wry twist, the equivalent of anyone's else's full groan of frustration. "I'll need to reload in a second, I'm almost out on both guns."

"Nora, boom boom! Pyrrha switch to helping Ren one, two..." Without even needing to finish the command, Harry launched himself towards where Nora was now jumping off of the wall of debris, his hands pushing forward as he sent a simple spell into the wall there, turning it into so much shrapnel that slammed into the horde of Grimm beyond. Even as he did, Nora added her own grenades into the mix.

That did it. The last of that first wave of Grimm were gutted. Instead of coming after the retreating defenders in the same all-powerful continuous wave that they had entered the kill zone, only a few Grimm were able to come after them along the streets as they retreated deeper into the city. And even those few Grimm fell to precise shots from Sung-Sun and Apacci.

It wouldn't last. Even as the last one fell, dozens of Weblings were scuttling towards them, followed by Creepers. But they were well behind the initial rush.

"Time we were gone troops!" Harry said gesturing Nora to join Tia at the front of the force, as they ducked into an alleyway, then into a building, getting away from the Nevermore. There they broke contact with the land-based Grimm for a few moments thanks to Harry raising a wall behind them.

All of them took the time to switch to new magazines, with Harry and the other two leaders taking a stock on their fellows. None of them had any actual injury, although a few of were reporting some bruises and sore muscles. This was invariably those like Sung-Sun or Ren who didn't have much Aura to speak of in comparison to those like Harry or his sister.

Having seen Tia get body-check by a Nevermore who had lost its wing; Harry took a second to check on her thumping his head against the side of hers looking at her inquiringly. *Not that I believe she's hurt, but hey, it's a great excuse to stare into her eyes.*

Tia seemed to know what he was doing, and she smiled at him, that same small, currently hidden smile that he had seen so often. Above them, Tia's eyes crinkled a bit, cerulean spheres of pleasure at his being there and the overall battle.

The two shared a look for a few seconds, then the explosives set into the killing ground went off. Having been set on a timer, Joachim had decided enough Grimm had pushed forward again into the now abandoned killing zone.

This served to cause Harry to remember this wasn't the time to get lost in Tia's eyes and he turned away after a final wink at her, asking Pyrrha how she was doing for Aura. "I know Nora would just need another charge, and Ren... well, I can carry you if ya need a nap, buddy."

Almost everyone there laughed at that and even Ren snorted. “While that sounds like a good idea on paper, Harry, please understand that while I consider you a brother-from-another-mother, I do want to keep some distance between us. Being seen getting carried by you while I am still conscious is a step beyond that.”

This drew another round of laughter from the two teams. The sole exception was Apacci, who was looking out the window they were walking by with a scowl his hands clenching and unclenching on his weapons, which he called Briar Patch for some reason.

They were new, a series of gladius that could mecha-shift into pistols. Ruby had developed them at Sung-Sun’s request, believing both faunus on her team could do with a weapons upgrade. The diminutive reaper had greatly enjoyed the job, using it as a break from math and language arts classes she was still struggling badly with. Helping Apacci and Mila Rose create new weapons had given her some extra credit she could use to offset a few bad essay grades. Mila Rose’s simple rifle, mace and shield had been replaced by a mecha-shift mace that shifted into a wide angle grenade launcher, paired with a shield that shifted into a gauntlet.

Looking closer at Apacci and Mila, the two looked a little put off, but were coping about as well as you could probably expect. *I doubt Glynda or the others assumed we’d be facing this type of fight when they brought us ickle freshies along. I just hope none of us break. That would be bad.* Shaking his head, Harry looked over at Pyrrha repeating his earlier question.

Pyrrha smiled faintly, drawing Harry’s eyes to her lips for a brief moment before he pushed such thoughts aside. That was the adrenaline talking, going in a new direction now they were out of direct conflict.

“My Aura reserves are fine, Harry. I haven’t done anything large scale yet, and guiding single shots with it isn’t all that difficult or Aura consuming.” Pyrrha reported, her eyes lighting with amusement as she realized where Harry’s eyes had gone. “That was a well-timed ambush, and I can’t believe even now we got away so cleanly.”

“Grimm are somewhat all or nothing without a driving intelligence. The only S-class Grimm we’ve seen so far are those Goliaths. And they don’t seem the commanding type,” Harry said dryly. “Plus, Arturia and the others killed so many of them outside of the city, there aren’t many left to direct the other Grimm at this point.” *I could have helped kill a few even with only the stuff Goodwitch has seen me use, but I wasn’t ordered to do so, and even then the damage was already done. The rest of the Grimm out there had already heard the dinner bell.*

“Good job Jasper, Anvil, Garnet. I’m sending you some coordinates now. We’re pulling back in good order, but I want to slow the Grimm down a bit more first. Harry, your team is to start bringing down some buildings. Look for signs...” Arturia’s voice came in over all of their coms, going on to list out a few street names Harry inputted into his scroll. “After that, retreat to the second kill zone. Sung-Sun, your team is going to head east and west. You should eventually link up with team Ruby. There are several larger buildings in that area and they are being pressed

hard. Prepare for close combat. Team Jasper on me. Remember to watch the skies. We're holding our own, but the Nevermore are still the main threat."

Harry and Sung-Sun both acknowledged the orders and began to chivvy their teams along. They found a dozen Weblings climbing up the side of the building, but were able to deal with them before splitting up, heading in different directions, both teams ducking into and through buildings as they went.

OOOOOOO

Arturia's warning about the Nevermore was certainly true in Company Black's territory, and the territories to either side of them. There, the companies didn't have as many dedicated long range, fast firing weapons, which let the Nevermore push further down into the skyline than they were able to do elsewhere in the city. Thankfully, there were no Greater Nevermore, although the Deathbills were slowly starting to become an issue.

However, in Glenda's and professor Port's territory, things were not going as smoothly. First, Glynda had yet to return and take command, leaving that task to the most experienced of the senior team leaders. This was causing a bit of friction, but more importantly removed one of the teams strongest fighters from that territory.

Meanwhile in Port's territory, four of the Goliaths had reached the wall while Glynda had moved on to deal with a few others. These were able to smash down significant areas of the wall before barreling their way into the city. Two of them had still died when Port caught up to them, but that left two roaming the city, smashing buildings with hundreds of Grimm all around them.

Because of that and a few other major break in, the battle was not going very well in Glynda's mind. They were supposed to stay here until night, but it was barely pushing midafternoon, and Glynda made the decision to call in the bullhead's early as she finally returned to her own command zone. Now they just needed to wait, and control a segment of the city where the bullheads could set down. That, admittedly, would still be a tall order, but at least Glynda could clear a zone the bullheads could land in.

OOOOOOO

Team Anvil, Team Jasper and the senior team under Timothy remained unengaged for more than an hour by more than Nevermore as they moved back through the city to take up position at the second kill zone, smashing down buildings as they went. Sometimes that was a real wrench. Seeing the packages of flowers getting buried or crushed was harsh, but it had to be done.

But after that hour passed, suddenly more Grimm began to appear. A lot of Weblings and the monkey-like Grimm, which were, Harry had learned, called Ookinators for some reason, crawled on and into the buildings after the Huntsmen while the Creepers and Beowolves came at them

along the roads or into and through the recently created firing lanes. Nor was it just those three teams. Instead, the Grimm were pressing all of Company Black hard.

By the time the group assigned to the second kill zone reached their positions the Grimm had appeared before them, and they were forced to fight through several more buildings before retreating through where that kill zone should have been without using it.

Luckily, that one too had been seeded with explosives like the previous kill zone. When these explosive went off, it was just as effective, making Harry shake his head as he watched. *Fuck me, but mines are seriously deadly against land-based Grimm. We are going to need to invest in them. And maybe figure out some way to... I don't know, reuse them? Eh, don't know how that would go. But they do a right nasty job of it.*

Because of the mines, they were able to break off somewhat easily. They then met up with the rest of the company in person.

“Team Anvil, Team Jasper, you’re on rear guard duty. Team Garnet, you’re with me at the front. We’re going to fall back to our secondary defense zone,” Arturia said, her tone crisp and authoritative, her hair not looking as if she was sweating at all, even as she raced forwards. “Team Ruby, left flank, team Trench right flank. Move into the buildings and move across the rooftops. Jasper, you’re on overwatch.”

Ruby whooped and led her team forward, with Yang pausing for a moment to salute Arturia, jokingly before Arturia in turn raced forward with Tia and the rest of team Anvil moved to take up the position that she had wanted them too.

OOOOOO

However, things began to go from bad yet manageable to truly worrying for the huntsman in training and their teachers. The Grimm began to act differently. Creepers and Beowulf’s would no longer stay in the street any longer than they had to. Instead they took to cover closing through the buildings with the Ookinators and Weblings, bypassing defensive points and encircling them several times, forcing the defenders to take to the rooftops to escape, whereupon Nevermore would set upon them and even denser clouds than previously. The various Goliaths – there turned out to be five not just the two Glynda had known about a few hours before - within the city also began to deliberately wait for other Grimm to appear before moving forward. And once the defenders concentrated their fire on the Goliaths, the Grimm all around would attack, moving up and through buildings and over rooftops so fast it had to be seen to be believed. Within two hours the defenders were pressed back throughout the city, pushed deep into their secondary defensive envelope.

Glenda noticed this shift in pattern within a few moments, and was very grateful that she had already decided to call in the bullheads early. Calling her company commanders on their private line, she informed them all simply, “We have an S class Grimm about, ladies and gentlemen. The Grimm will act differently and with far more coordination. We need to hold another hour. Pull

back to our tertiary defensive envelope as you can break contact with the ground Grimm. I have already cleared a landing area for the bullheads.”

She thought about it for a few moments, then contacted Oobleck and Jorge Ironhand. He was the master of the forge in Beacon, and was along this mission as leader of Company Blue. With his acceptance, she then contacted Team CFVY. “Coffee, pull back from your current position. You’re to link up with team Orange.” That was one of the senior teams assigned to the Remembrance this year, who specialized in scouting and silent movement through all kinds of terrain and was originally in Oobleck’s company. “You’re going S-class hunting.”

OOOOOOO

Tia snarled as the door to one side of the hallway team Garnet were moving in burst open, and two Beowulf alphas leapt forward. They were instantly followed by a dozen monkey Grimm, the name of which Tia had been told a few hours ago but which she couldn’t bring to mind at the moment.

“Tia, take the forward position. Mila, bring down the ceiling behind us, we’re going to take our chances.”

By which Sung Sun was speaking about the odds of Mila bringing the roof down on top of them as well as behind them, blocking the Grimm who had chased them into this building. *Which looks far too much like an adult movie theater for my tastes. I swear I’m going to tear Apacci a new one for this! Why did he lead us into here! Why did he pull back in the first place? We were supposed to go straight across the next two streets, not down that last one and then almost doubling back. It might have worked to throw off most of the Grimm after us but given how many Grimm are around....*

“Apacci, you watch right, I’ll watch left,” She growled.

Mila obligingly turned, slamming a fist into the top of the doorway behind them that they had just come through. Her blow shattered the ceiling there, and debris began to fall, blocking the way of a few spider Grimm that had been crawling up the outside of the building they had just leaped into a moment ago. At the same time, Apacci and Sung-Sun opened fire on still more Grimm coming out of the rooms to either side. Sung-Sun’s fire was controlled and aimed, while Apacci’s was a bit wild at first, but he seemed to get it under control after a second.

Further down the hallway leading into private viewing booths Tia slammed into the group of Grimm coming straight at them, grabbing one Beowulf by his throat and squeezing so hard she cracked the armor around its neck, using it as a flail while her other hand flicked with her sword, decapitating, disarming, literally, and beheading as she went.

And yes. When Tia used Tiburon, beheadings did need to be emphasized by mentioning it twice.

At the same time, her own Grimm armor began to appear above and below her Huntress outfit, and along her legs.

The effect on the Grimm all around them was immediate. All the Beowolves and Creepers insight howled as one, rushing towards Tia, ignoring the others around her. This was just fine by Tia, who swung Tiburon around ever faster, cutting and hacking, conserving her Water Crystal for now.

Still more Grimm were pouring through somewhere else on the floor, and after a second Sung-Sun reluctantly ordered Mila into one of the viewing booths. "Smash a hole there and we'll go down to the next floor."

"Fine, but, okay, the fuck!?! Do men really think there are women around with tits that big? They make Tia's or Xiao-Long's look small," Mila grumbled, staring at the posters on the wall. "UGH. Doing the world a favor destroying this place. Honestly, even cow faunus women don't have tits that size."

"The joys of overactive imaginations and the libidos of men who have no hope whatsoever of even touching a real woman," Sung-Sun quipped, as Mila smashed a hole in the floor. When the debris stopped falling, Sung-Sun leapt down, with Apacci behind her, heading forward quickly, downing a few more Grimm there were on the lower level. But most had already bypassed it racing to engage the hunters where they had been on the second floor a second ago."

"Mila, get down here! We move," Sarah shouted, before pinpointing direction she wanted to go, and, when Tia joined them, pointed at a wall. "That way. Plow the road. Apacci, we are leaving!"

Nodding, Tia charged forwards, the Grimm armor up to her nose as it had been in her battle with Cardin. Tiburon slashed, and the wall came down as she barreled into it, while behind her, Mila fired up into the hole, a few times, timed explosives going up in the air above from her new weapon before racing out of the hole in the wall after Tia.

Sung-Sun watched them for a moment, then Apacci, her eyes narrowing a bit before she shrugged and raced after them.

OOOOOOO

Elsewhere, the fighting was even more desperate. Harry and his team had been forced to retreat across the rooftops after using the third killing zone, pulling to the side and almost entirely out of Company Black's area of control, before they lighted down onto the top of a supermarket of some kind. Behind them, Ookinators leaped, only for most of them to die under Nora's grenades, exploding on impact in the air and taking several of the fellows with them. Others died to Pyrrha's precise fire, but still more were climbing up the outside of the building already.

"Gah! There are too many of these monkey bastards! Why can't they be as cute as sloths!" Nora complained.

As they came though, Harry transfigured the protective wall around the edge of the rooftop into so many spikes, stabbing upwards into them, giving the team a brief respite to rush across to the opposite side of the building. There, they discovered to their dismay all three of the buildings on the other side of the road had been smashed in the initial battle centuries ago. This was not a planned cleared zone, or one with a set series of mines. No, this area had been like this before they arrived in the city.

And the rubble below was crawling with Grimm. Beowolves for the most part, with a few Alphas scattered around, staring up at the roof with far-too intelligent eyes. none of them could climb, unlike the spider and monkey-like Grimm who had chased them into this trap.

Harry breathed in briefly, then shook his head slightly, and began to raise his hands. His near constant use of his magic had begun to wear on him a bit.

But Pyrrha stopped him, gesturing him back with her shield arm. "Let me, Harry. We might need your powers again before the bullheads arrive."

He nodded, and turned, bringing up his rifle and firing at a few Weblings that were coming through the spikes behind him, using his powers once again on that front to kill still more, while Nora knocked a Nevermore out of the sky when it got too close and Ren fired at several more. For a moment, however, the rooftop was clear of enemies and Pyrrha had a brief moment to concentrate on what she wanted to do. *Thank goodness I've been training more in large scale attacks like this!*

Bringing her shield hand up again, Pyrrha thrust forward, imagining her metal sense, the part of her polarity powers that always was able to tell when metal was nearby, was a bubble that she was thrusting out into the debris below them and underneath all of the Grimm milling about there. *They must have been herding us this way for at least a few blocks, a trap where we are either forced to stay here under siege or head down into that horde, with more coming up behind us all the time.*

But a trap is only deadly if you are able to close it, Pyrrha thought, and feeling the metal within the debris below, wrenched it upwards.

For a moment, nothing happened. Then hundreds, then thousands of nails, rivets, and other small bits of metal debris, and random bits of metal junk lifted into the air from all over, bypassing the Grimm or smashing into them from below like a bullet.

They should have run at that point. But the Grimm without an S-class right there to see what was happening; couldn't figure out what the strange cloud suddenly hovering above them was. Until she gestured once more, and sent the mass of metal debris down like so much hail. And it wasn't just the amount of metal coming their way that made it deadly. No, it was also the speed which Pyrrha could impart to it. Almost as fast as bullet rounds, those bits and chunks of metal slammed into the Grimm, slaying nearly every Grimm in sight in the rubble below.

She gasped then, and would have fallen to her knees if not for Harry rapidly grabbing her around the waist, holding her upright. “Nora, your turn again. First down, smash anything that gets in our way. Ren, you’re last.”

Above, the Nevermore had noticed the cloud, and come down to investigate, and now were coming down to attack them in turn. But Ren’s fire kept them back as Harry held Pyrrha to his side, racing after Nora who had just leaped off of the roof with a loud whoop.

Pyrrha recovered quickly enough, but as they pushed through the debris where the mass of Grimm had once been, the Grimm were not done with them. As they raced on through a few tall buildings on the other side of the old battleground, to one side of them, a huge towering office or apartment complex loomed, nearly fifteen stories tall, one of the tallest buildings in the city. Pyrrha recognized it as the building where Arturia had first come down, and near where she had been dumped into that mud patch right before a Goliath smashed its way out of the building, trumpeting a challenge.

It was so close some of the debris hit Harry and Pyrrha, smashing both of them off their feet, while the Goliath’s long nose caught Ren. He would have been possibly smashed into the sky if not for a hasty spell from Harry pulling them out of danger, the Arc having been saved mostly by his massive Aura reserves.

A second later, Pyrrha got her shield up in time to block a tusk that would otherwise have gored her, but found herself also flung through the air, rolling with it even as she she was hit, noticing Akuo had been badly dented. “I so don’t want to know what that did to my aura reserves!” she shouted.

“Probably not, no,” Harry said, changing the ground underneath the foot of the Goliath into sludge. The Goliath flailed, its footing disappearing and nearly falling to his side, but pushing itself back out with difficulty.

Then Harry turned, his hand lashing out towards Nora. “Finish it off, Nora!” What hit Nora was a bolt of lightning, and, much like she would’ve done to the energy of any battery she touched, Nora absorbed it. “Aww, yeah, that’s the stuff Fearless Leader! Have I mentioned how much I love having someone who can conjure up lightning on my team!?”

Then she was rushing forward, her hammer slamming the nose of the Goliath out of her way. To it’s enraged cry. A tusk was next, the tusk, made of Grimm armor, shattering under her next strike, and then a third hammer blow back into the side of the creature’s head, shattering bone and tissue alike, sending it stumbling and then finally collapsing.

Four more strikes were needed to finish the massive Grimm off despite the power up. But the creature was never able to push itself back to its feet thanks to Harry’s mud trap, and the continued blows to it’s head kept the Grimm too disoriented.

By that point, Ren and Harry had both turned their attention up to the Nevermore trying to swarm them, and they were once more retreating into the rubble left behind by the Nevermore now. Several times shields flickered into existence, absorbing and burning the acid coming their way from Deathbills. Then they were shifting sideways, pushing through what remained of the building the Goliath had smashed through.

A horde of Creepers came after them, leaping through the rubble, only to run straight into thousands of conjured ball bearings and needles. Hurling by Pyrrha they slammed through the horde like old-fashioned canister shot from the cannon era.

For a few moments, there weren't even any Nevermores in the sky, and Nora shook her head, staring at Harry and Pyrrha. "Come on you two! How am I supposed to keep count of our different kill counts if you coop on kills like that. And so many of them!"

Team Anvil all looked at one another, then began to laugh, even Ren snickering at his best friend's words as Harry mock-apologized, causing Pyrrha to laugh even louder.

Their laughter was interrupted as Harry's com set beeped with an incoming call. "Harry, pull your team back entirely to..." Once more Harry's oldest lover rattled off a few street names, and Harry pulled out his scroll even as he kept walking, trusting the others to see any danger as he did. He picked out the position and noted that it was very near to the area of the city that had been designated the extraction point. "Use your Semblance to create a defensive structure there, all around the extraction point. Even if Teams Orange and Coffee succeed, we're going to need it."

Amazed that she could still sound so cool and collected even now, Harry replied in the affirmative, then deadpanned, "And after all this is over, I think we all deserve a chocolatey treat when we get back to beacon. I'm taking on requests for what that treat might be right now.... sister dear."

OOOOOO

Glynda looked over to where Arturia had begun to laugh quietly, one eyebrow raised even as she used her telekinesis to toss a dozen Nevermore into one another. With her riding crop directing it, she then tossed the entire bundle at several more. "What is so funny, Arturia?"

"Nothing about our present difficulties, I assure you, Professor. Simply a sign that my brother certainly knows how to motivate a woman." *Even if hearing him call me a sister does seem wrong at this point. Still appearances must be maintained.* "Death by some chocolate confectionary made by my brother, oh yes. Sign me up for that."

Remembering some of the culinary delights she had had with Harry so far, Glynda could only nod in answer, turning her attention to a Goliath that had just burst out into view chasing one of the teams from company Historian, Oobleck's command. With a grimace, she reached out, grabbing at the Grimm, sweat staining her face and brow for a moment. Then, like the previous

two she had dealt with, she lifted it into the air, and hurled it back down with bone crushing force.

Glynda swayed them, the continued drain on her Aura slowly growing on her.

But she was still there on the roof as Harry and the others arrived, and she watched as the first wall went up across the main road, linking to buildings together. This was followed by several more, and she slowly shook her head, somewhat awed at the power that Harry's semblance had. *And, whereas I am slowly becoming tired both mentally and physically he is still pushing on. That is even more impressive.*

The defenders got a break then, as Glenda's radio began to speak. "Professor, this is Olivero, mission accomplished: one S class, a Ligerbyte, slain. Moving back into the city now."

"Excellent job, you two. Take team Coffee and your own straight back to the extraction point. You will find a defense already going up there." Even without an S-class directing them, there were still just too many Grimm for them to try to reclaim territory now. The best they could do would be to retreat.

Which was fine by Glynda. This wasn't an extermination mission. Given the open ends of the valleys around Mountain Glenn, that might have been impossible regardless. No, this was simply the Remembrance. They had done their duty, cleaned the city of Grimm when they first arrived, and laid remembrances throughout the city to replace those from five years ago.

And, Glenda thought more importantly, these students had lived through not only that initial cleansing, but this battle too. They would not only remember the death and needless sacrifice of the townsfolk here, but would remember having to fight for their own lives.

All the company commanders kept a firm rein on their various teams, pulling them in slowly, in fits and starts throughout the city. Pyrrha, Ren and Nora were ordered off to help any team that got into trouble, moving from one segment of the city to the next with Glynda, putting out fires so to speak wherever they went while Harry concentrated on creating defenses. By the time he was finished, the area around the extraction point was defended by concrete and metal reinforced walls meters thick that the remaining Grimm could simply not penetrate. Not a single Goliath survived to this point, and without them, none of the Grimm fighting their way through the city could break through such a defense.

He was utterly exhausted by that point, and leaned on Pyrrha heavily once the other three rejoined him. But with Ruby on the wall in their segment, none of the Grimm could get close, not Nevermore and not land-based Grimm either. Weblings and Ookinators would still be a threat, but the S-class Grimm had hurled them into the fight early on, not understanding the need to keep a reserve for later on in the battle. And by this point, there were few left. Creepers and Beowolves made up the vast majority of the enemy on the ground, but there were still just too damn many of them.

Soon, the first of the bullheads began to arrive. And with them came two more bullheads, which were not the type that had dropped the teams off scattered across the city. No, these were impressively well armed bullheads, and when they began to announce their presence, it reminded Harry of helicopters he had seen from documentaries back in his old world. Their guns even sounded somewhat alike, a loud “Braapppp!” sound. Nevermore faded away like they’d never been as these guns opened up, chewing large chunks out of the still massive cloud of Nevermore over the city until the first of the transport bullheads, large, triple-leveled ones, began to touchdown.

“We are gone ladies and gentlemen. Teams Ruby, Bronze, Fushia, you’re first,” Glynda ordered, naming teams she knew either had injured personnel or people whose Auras were undoubtedly running dry.

Not twenty minutes later, the three more bullheads began to lift off, carrying all of the teens and adults to safety. Mountain Glenn belonged to the Grimm once more, but it would be decades before the Grimm in this territory rebuilt their numbers to the point where they had been before this battle.

OOOOOOO

Glynda sighed in relief, leaning back in the copilot’s chair, happy and relieved that they had been able to escape. *Injuries galore, but none serious, and no deaths? After being forced to fight a herd of Goliaths, an S-class Grimm able to command others, and thousands of other Grimm? Yes, I can safely call this a victory.*

Looking back over the events of the day, it was very clear from the moment they had seen those Goliaths the day was going to go badly for them. So little data was available about how they responded to threats as every other time Goliaths have been seen, they had been part of a larger attack. But now, it was very obvious that they were not only far stronger and more durable than Glynda had thought, but also more intelligent. They weren’t able to command other Grimm thankfully, but even so, they had made a mockery of the outer wall of Mountain Glenn, and Glynda knew for a fact they had knocked down at least three or more of the guard towers along with portions of the wall.

If not for myself, Professor Port, Arturia and Mr. Arc, I don’t know if we would’ve survived. As it was, all of these students did very well. As for Harry, while I didn’t observe a large portion of that aspect of the battle, but he too impressed me... far more than I had expected. I knew going in that Harry had magic, thanks to our training and my discussions with Ozpin. But he acted like a veteran, more experienced and calmer under fire than any of our senior teams. How? Why? Where did Harry accumulate such experience. Regardless, I think his hatred of the Grimm is proven if his expression when he joined Arturia and I at the wall is anything to go by.

While Ozpin felt he was more valuable acting on his own, I think at this point it would be a waste to let him keep going without someone to guide his actions. I am positive that he could do much better for the entire world alongside Professor Ozpin and the rest of the circle.

With that in mind Glynda sent a message back to Beacon to the Headmaster. "The Arc has proven worth more than a Knight. A meeting is advised."

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In the back of the various bullheads, the kids are also having their own thoughts. Harry's was, perhaps unsurprisingly, the most mature. Even setting aside the first twenty-four hours where they had been clearing the Grimm out of the city, the second day had been the most combat Harry had seen in this world so far. But it had also been a victory in his mind, a minor one, sure, but it would be years, maybe decades before the Grimm in this area became as dangerous. Specifically the number of Goliaths would take even longer, and they had proven without doubt that traps and pits would make even those monsters far easier to deal with than otherwise.

And there had been **no** deaths on their own side. A few close calls, to be certain. Pyrrha nearly being gored by the Goliath, and Team Beret, one of the junior teams nearly being cut off by a horde of Weblings came to his mind, but they had all come through it. Not just his team, not just Company Black, but the entire group who had set off into Mountain Glenn for the Remembrance.

He looked up as Arturia came by, exchanging a nod with the oldest of his three lovers, knowing that were they not in public, she would be a bit more effusive than simply nodding at him before moving on. He did grin however as Tia's arm snaked out, grabbing Arturia's arm and tugging her off her feet and into Tia's lap. Fully into her touchy-feely phase after using Haribel, Tia wrapped her arms around the other girl like an octopus, pinning her arms to her sides refusing to let her go even as Arturia began to remonstrate with her.

"Botheration Tia, let me go! If you want to cuddle with someone, your partner is right here!" Arturia growled.

"No. You're snugglier." Tia answered, her voice muffled both by her turtleneck and Arturia's soft chest. The older girl had divested herself of her armor once the pilots had given the all clear, much like Harry and a few others. "And Harry's out of reach."

A tiny, almost invisible flush appeared on Arturia's face at that. And although she continued to complain, Sung-Sun and Harry exchanged smirks as they noticed Arturia leaning down to lay her cheek on the top of her younger sister's head. Although Harry had to fight back a little laugh at how Sung-Sun glanced down at her chest a second later, seeming to become a bit annoyed as she realized what Tia might mean by saying Arturia was better to snuggle with. *Funny how after such a fight we all fall back into so-called normal modes of thinking so quickly.*

Sitting across from Pyrrha, Ren was as tranquil, pun intended, as normal, although he had yet to release Nora's hand, and he looked to be either nodding off or about to start meditating. With Ren it was hard to tell which, but Harry was impressed he wasn't dead to the world yet given his endurance and Aura reserve issues. *Looks like our endurance training at least has born fruit.*

Sitting across from Harry on the window side of the plane, Nora was just out of it, leaning against his shoulder and snoring and Harry estimated it hadn't even been ten minutes since they left the ground yet. *Looks like her adrenaline drains out all at once. Or it could be the effect of her Semblance hitting her all at once? Not as plausible, but I'll need to be aware of that when we're on longer missions.*

Pyrrha was on the opposite side of things. She still seemed to have energy to burn, and was practically bouncing in place, her jade eyes gleaming. It was very evident that she too saw this as a victory, and she was ebullient to have been a part of it.

Any battle in which you can do so much damage to the Grimm and walk away without losing anyone is a victory Harry thought, pushing to his feet and holding out his hand to her. "My lady, would you like to do the rounds of the bullhead with me? Check in with the other teams, boost their spirits a bit, make sure they're alright after that kind of action? I don't think Arturia's going to be escaping Tia anytime soon."

Pyrrha smiled took her his hand, and let Harry pull her to her feet. "That sounds grand, Harry." Using her public persona like that was something she was actually comfortable with, especially with people she had fought alongside. *This isn't like promoting a product, and I doubt that anyone here will ask for my autograph. And if they still see me as being set on some kind of pedestal above them, I can hope that they either dream of joining me there, or will at least view me as an example.*

Her thoughts were interrupted as as Harry whipped out his scroll and took a picture of the still protesting Arturia being cuddled almost like a giant teddy bear by Tia, a bubble of laughter escaping her as Harry spoke. "Ahh... sweet, sweet blackmail."

"Harry! If that picture sees the light of day, I have certain pictures of you that will find themselves spread about!" Arturia warned. "I have years upon years of such. You do not want to play that game with me."

"How do you know I was talking about you?" Harry responded with a mock-huff.

Tia turned to him, one eyebrow rising in amusement while Arturia stared at him deadpan before Tia turned back and nuzzled into Arturia's chest again. This caused Arturia's flush to deepen a bit, but this wasn't the first time she had seen how cuddly Tia got after using Harribel for long periods of time. "Really? Would you like to try again? And I warn you that if the next words out of your mouth are not, 'I promise to keep that picture to myself, Arturia' or something similar, your entire class will receive a picture of your first time in the kitchen, the one with the pancake batter."

With Sung-Sun and Pyrrha laughingly asking about that picture, Harry ruefully promised that he wouldn't share his new picture with anyone, before gathering what was left of his dignity and turned away. A still chuckling Pyrrha followed, and the two of them headed deeper into the double-stacked bullhead, heading upstairs.

As they went, the people he and Pyrrha interacted with perked up. Some shook Harry's hands, thanking him for raising the wall they'd used as a final defense. Others gushed about Pyrrha for some bit of bravery they had seen when all the different companies had fallen back to that, final area of defense. She and surprisingly Ruby had, simply by fighting and providing examples for others, been a major source of morale for the teens when they were at their lowest ebb.

Arturia watched them go with a smile seeing the two of them doing what should have been her job so well. Then she sighed and went back to snuggling with her younger sister. Resistance, after all, was futile.

Others were not so sanguine about the events of the day as the Arcs. The first day in Mountain Glenn had been pretty straightforward for the seniors and juniors, they'd been on missions like that before, although fighting even Grimm in a city was never something anyone enjoyed. Most of the sophomore and freshman students were somewhat shaken though. This included Mila, although she didn't show it. Inside, that level of battle was not something she ever wanted to see again.

I'll finish out my year, that will give me credits to wherever I go next. But I am not going to be a Hunter if that kind of fighting is what I have to... look forward to... for the rest of my life. I'll become a policeman or something. I know the police are always happy to offer a job to anyone with their Aura activated. Vacuo wouldn't even care about my faunus heritage. Maybe even Vale, with that Torchwick guy running wild. Although that's a bit doubtful, Mila thought, leaning back and closing her eyes, not noticing how her hands were shaking as the adrenaline wore off.

A few other freshmen had similar thoughts, and indeed in the case of one team from Oobleck's company, all of them were already talking quietly about the same thing Mila had decided on: finishing the year, and then deciding what to do from then on. They had formed a tight knit group, and were in fact one of the better freshman foursomes when it came to actual teamwork. They were determined to stick together going forward, but this level of combat was something none of them had anticipated.

None of the four came from families that had produced Huntsman before, and so had simply not been ready for the numbers or violence or the all-encompassing hate that the Grimm felt towards mankind. Seeing Mountain Glenn on the ground, the skeletons, the destruction, and then seeing and fighting the Grimm, it was too much.

But that team was the minority. Most of the freshman class had known what to expect, and had kept their morale high throughout the battle. Ruby in particular had gone out of her way to raise spirits whenever she interacted with anyone else, not just her own team but everyone,

and she was not alone in this. While the reality of combat on this scale and the fact that there was no real glory or honor in fighting Grimm was something of a shock to many, it was one that most of the students were dealing with quite well, and that lesson that was the reason why Ozpin and the rest of the Beacon staff used freshman as well as juniors seniors and sophomores on this mission. Aspirations like Ruby's to change the world for the good, or Yang' to have fun, to see the world and to seek out thrills was one thing. But they also had to understand that being a Huntsman was a job, and it was a very thankless, exceptionally dangerous one on occasion.

It was one other student, however, who was not dealing with fighting in the city as well as the others, and that was Apacci. Even as Sung-Sun made a point of asking him and Mila if they were all right, and then joining a discussion going on with some of the other team leaders, Apacci hid this from everyone, his jaw clenched in anger. Because, like many of the other freshmen, this had been his first run in with so many Grimm. And he had not dealt with it well.

In fact, he had done the one thing that no huntsman could ever do. He had run.

Well, he had attempted to run anyway, but it had backfired several times, putting him in still more danger as his team followed him, assuming that Apacci had seen a mass of Grimm or a way forward out of the building they were fighting in. He hadn't. He had just been scared, terrified of the sheer number of Grimm they were facing. And that had worked to bring the Grimm down on them all the more.

But unlike Mila, Apacci had an ego. He could not see his own problems as caused by his own actions. Whatever problems Apacci ran into, they always had to be someone else's doing. It wasn't his fault he had ran, it was Arturia's fault for putting him and his team in such a dangerous position. It was Sung-Sun's fault he had broken and tried to escape when they were cornered in that one building because she had led them into an ambush. And it was team RWBY's fault for not backing them up when he, in his hopes of getting away from the fighting, had led his team almost into another trap.

(Which had inadvertently allowed them to kill a lot of Grimm. There was a reason why Sung-Sun didn't realize Apacci had run yet.)

And when Glynda and Arturia had ordered team Garnet to be one of the last two teams onto the bullhead, it was obvious to Apacci why, and with that reason came hatred.

While Tia might be a little teacher's pet, their team was also the only team that had two faunus on it, and to Apacci that meant they were more expendable in the eyes of humans. It had not been lost on him either that none of the companies had been led by a faunus. Even none of the team leaders were faunus either.

The school might yammer on about how it is an equal opportunity school, how racism is not allowed, but it took them so long to clamp down on Cardin, and there are other bullies about too. And look at our leaders! None of them are faunus, not in my year or in any of the others!

That wasn't actually the case. There were three teams elsewhere in Beacon who were led by faunus. But one of the senior teams was away from Beacon at the moment, and the other two had not been selected to join the Remembrance.

But Apacci did not know that. He only saw what he wanted to see. And right now, after the fight, Apacci did not want to see his own shortcomings. He wanted to see that it was someone else's fault he had been put in those situations. He wanted to see that it was because of bigotry. And so he did.

Fuck! I knew the White Fang had a point when it came to Atlas, but I thought Beacon and Vale might be a little better, and for a bit it looked like it was. But it isn't. They still treat us faunus like trash, like we're disposable! I bet the only reason they don't do that to Belladonna is because she hides her features! He had finally seen her without her ribbon on, and knew for a fact the girl was a cat faunus now, and had also finally remembered where he had heard the name Belladonna from. The daughter of the man who started the White Fang and she's on a team with the Schnee! Fucking race traitor! The next time I can get into Vale I'm going to see if I can find a rally. I wonder what the White Fang will give me for telling them where a traitor is, or that she's on the same team as a Schnee...

OOOOOOO

Salem scowled in irritation, but it was a thoughtful irritation, not true annoyance. The battle in Mountain Glenn had been but chance once more playing into her hand in a way she had hoped to take advantage of. While the slaughter of the Goliaths was irritating for any future endeavors against Vale, she could not say that she personally had lost much of anything. Even the single Seer she'd had to work with was still alive, slowly floating after the bullheads back to observe Beacon from afar.

And while the battle had not cost any lives among the hunters-to-be, it had given Salem something else to think about. Several of the students had amazingly dangerous Semblances: a girl who could create ammunition for her gun seemingly as long as her aura lasted. A young man who could be this generation's Juggernaut, as dangerous as Port was in his prime. A young woman with tanned skin who had some truly unique skill to turn into a strange Grimm-human hybrid. And one young huntsman in particular. One who was using not a Semblance but magic. No semblance, not even Goodwitch's could create so many different attacks or defenses. Salem recognized him as one of the youths she had tested in their initiation several months back, and she now wished even more fervently she had more Seers in the area at the time.

I suppose I can be grateful I was able to move more Seers around Beacon since this year's Initiation, but does this mean that Ozpin still has enough strength to past his abilities on? Why would he do so now? Did he somehow regain power, and then decided to share it with someone young and impressionable? But why? Or could it mean that this boy somehow found some other means of gaining magic, such as a fifth relic even I and Ozpin do not know about?

I need to know more and move pieces into place to remove him. Cinder's plans might not be enough, especially given her latest reports.

"Find Hazel and bring him here," she called, sending one of her other Seers off to find the man. He was one of three of her followers who routinely stayed in her palace, although he mostly spent his time training, while Salem honestly wasn't certain what Tyrian did most of the time once he was decanted from her cloning vats. But while she was going to set Tyrian loose, this wasn't going to be his problem. Instead, Salem would send Tyrian straight to Vale. ***Cinder has already hinted they might need aid there, and Tyrian will do far better than relying further on the White Fang or one of our purloined Paladins.***

But beyond removing this new wizard, she needed to know where he got his magic from.

With that thought, Salem moved to the window of her throne room, she gazed out into the Grimm pulls beyond, raising her hand and gesturing. The nearest Grimm pool began to shudder and shift even more than normal, and from within, a small black globule formed, shifting upward, and then swiftly forming into a tiny Grimm that looked like an unholy cross between a scorpion and a hummingbird.

Salem scowled, shaking her head and sending the creature back down, refining what she wanted better in her own mind. When next a tiny Grimm popped out of the primordial Ooze that gave them life, it was only slightly larger, but this time, looked like a cross between a hummingbird and one of her Seer. It was about the size of her forearm, with a large eye on its back, two smaller eyes forward on either side of its beak, and for mandibles below that, along with wings.

She gestured again, and it came to land on Salem's hand, at which point she turned as heavy stomping boots entered her throne room.

The man wearing those boots was massive, so tall he towered over even Salem, who was exceptionally tall for a woman, and so broad across that he made three of her. His face was set in a serious frown, although his cheeks showed smile lines as well, and he had a nice, well-trimmed beard to go with short brown hair.

Yet for all Hazel Rainart's size and obvious power, there was no question as to who was the more powerful between them, and Hazel bowed from the waist in respect. He was no sycophant like Tyrian, or although she didn't show it much, Cinder. Like Doctor Watts he had his own reasons to work alongside Salem, and he shivered a bit as he looked at the Grimm landing on Salem's arm. While he was willing to work alongside the mistress of Grimm, Salem knew Hazel had never gotten used to it.

Something which amused Salem greatly now, considering he would need to go into the Grimm Lands around mistral on this mission for certain, hence why Salem had created this new type of Grimm just for him. **"Hazel. Ozpin has drawn an incredibly powerful but young huntsman to his side."**

At that, Salem gestured again, and one of her other floating Seers projected an image of the young man in question into the room, caught as he was when casting a cutting spell that sliced through not only Grimm but deep into a building. **“My seer was able to get close enough to hear him called Harry Arc. The Arcs are somewhat known to me, a family of Huntsmen from Mistral who have fathered many an annoyance in the past. More importantly, this boy has powers that he should not possess, powers that are more like mine and Ozpin’s than anyone else I have seen, even Glynda. I wish to know how he learned such powers. As we have never seen even a hint of him around before, it is doubtful that he was trained personally by Ozpin, but if not, then where did he get these powers from? We must discover the answer.”**

A flash of anger crossed Hazel’s face at the mention of Ozpin, but he reined it in with the ease of long practice, and lifted one hand up to tug thoughtfully at his beard. He said nothing for a few seconds, thinking it through, something that Salem liked in the man. Although she didn’t trust him to remain by her side once Hazel learned her full intentions, Salem could at least trust him to think things through most of the time. That was enough. ***One works with what one has.***

“My lady, I take it this individual is a Beacon student? But that does not necessarily mean he is working with... The headmaster,” Hazel said, unable to bring himself to even say Ozpin’s name without clenching his teeth so hard they threatened to break despite his Aura. “Are we certain that they are working alongside one another?”

“I am certain that Ozpin knows that he wields true magic, rather than a semblance. But you are correct. Perhaps he is simply an aspiring huntsman, unaware of the true nature of Ozpin, let alone his inner circle,” Salem mused. **“That does not change the mission I wish you to go on, however. Find out everything you can have about this man without being discovered. Odd tales, adventures of his youth that are known to those who know him. Areas beyond the known towns and cities that he has been to.”**

If there is a fifth relic out there, I must secure it before Ozpin can, Salem added internally.

Hazel nodded, then asked a few questions about transportation, communication and resources, shivering when he learned that he would be transported across the ocean by a water dwelling Grimm. And that he would be taking along the newest monstrosity on Salem’s arm with him for communication. **“Money is no object as you know thanks to the tiny worm Dr. Watts left in the Atlas’ government’s computer system. If you discover anything of importance, contact me through this modified seer. I will be aware of whatever you are seeing after that point.”**

“Yes, my lady,” Hazel said resignedly, bowing his head. “And my work in Vacuo? Will Tyrian or someone else take over for me?”

“No. The White Fang will need to do without their little toys for a time. Let the factors you have built up in Vacuo continue to bring those toys together, and we will discover some other means to get them into Adam’s hands later on,” Salem answered after a moment. The White

Fang were after all only a back-up to the plan that Cinder had come up with. They could afford to wait for now.

Hazel bowed, and left the room, leaving Salem alone once more. She turned, looking across the Grimm Pools below, wondering about this new player in the game, wondering about his magic, what its limitations work if there were any, and how best to suborn him. ***The game has changed a bit, more than I anticipated. But the board is still mine, Ozpin. Whatever new knight you have brought to your side will not change things in the long run.***

OOOOOOO

By the time the bullheads set down in Beacon, everyone aboard had time to recover a little bit. In other words, they were all able to move, but their aura reserves had not returned to their full capacity, nor had their physical energy. The scattered aches and pains did not bear thinking about, and most of the freshmen who had gone on the Remembrance walked like zombies as they exited the bullheads, while the older students were much more used to things, with the seniors even joking and laughing with one another as they exited, pointing out specific first years who looked as if they needed a minder to get them to where they were going.

All the students paused as they saw Ozpin waiting for them, a faint smile on his face as he leaned on the cane in one hand, and lifted his habitual coffee cup to his mouth with the other, taking a long sip before he spoke. His voice was low, yet commanding, and everyone there stood, nearly entranced. “And so you all return, a little battered, and certainly exhausted, but hopefully wiser. The Remembrance is a time of reflection and mourning, a time when those who are sent on it come face to face with the grim realities of fighting our eternal enemy. I hope it has hardened your resolve, and that you will not shirk from your duties going forward.”

Ozpin let his gaze move over all the students around him, not letting his gaze linger on Harry or any of the other students he hoped to watch over going forward. “I hope further you have learned more about yourself, your team members, and huntsman in general. But for now, a moment of silence for all those who have given their lives or have had them taken in this dreadful war it is our destiny to fight.”

Everyone there bowed their heads, even the bullhead’s noise slowly dying out as they remembered what they had seen in the city. Not just the fighting, but the desolation before. The skeletons, the shattered buildings, the city having been left to rot.

When they looked up, Osborne nodded at them all, and then turned without another word, gesturing with his cane for the teachers to follow him.

Behind him, Harry sighed. *And once more, Ozpin shows that he is very much not a rousing speech sort of leader. The concept of morale seems to be foreign to him, or perhaps he is so jaded he thinks all Huntsmen need to only be driven by their own motivations or loathing of the Grimm rather than any kind of large scale goal? Regardless, I think I would have taken a page out of Wood’s book here in rousing the kids. But it’s not my place to do that here.*

Around Harry, all of the students began to disperse, although several of them almost instantly began to fall asleep on their feet again.

Blake was one of the most exhausted. Like most of her team bar Yang, she wasn't made for long periods of mid to high level exertions, she was instead built for shorter sprints of extreme exertion and the size of her aura reserves reflected this. After one full day of scattered combat, a bare few hours sleep and another almost full day of even harder, far more constant combat, all Blake wanted to do was to get to her room and collapse into bed. Even the streaks of sweat and grime on her didn't matter at all in favor of that one goal, despite normally being as fastidious as a cat when it came to grooming.

But the moment they had entered Vale airspace, her scroll had pinged with a specific ring tone, telling her that her parents had gotten back to her about her request to learn Seinna Khan's phone number. Remembering that conversation actually put a faint smile on her face, the looks on her parent's faces, the odd looks they'd exchanged when they learned she wanted to share their phone number with an Arc and hearing about how her great-grandfather had been a friend of Harry's had been surprising but interesting. The fact they knew about Evig Låga and were willing to at least listen to Harry was even better. And now there was this new phone number he could use to contact them.

Thinking what another pro-faunus city-state could mean for her people spurred Blake into action despite her exhaustion. *And hopefully I can ignore the fact that Yang almost certainly knows that I'm a faunus now, and what she might do with that information. Well, at least I think that's what all the cat puns were about last night when she and I were on watch. If I put off talking to her long enough, maybe she'll forget about it?* It wasn't the best plan, but was the only one Blake could think of that involves running away entirely, and while Yang knowing her secret was kind of scary, it wasn't at that level.

Stumbling through the crowd, Blake made a point of bumping into Harry's back, almost accidentally hugging him for a moment, before pulling back with a faint flush and apologizing.

Harry chuckled, and reached out, taking her by the elbow and helping to guide her away from the crowd of slowly dispersing students. "It's okay. I know fighting night and day like that with little rest isn't very fun." *I've not faced fights like that often, but when you do, it really isn't fun.*

"It hurts to admit, but Weiss, Ruby and I all need to work on our endurance more," Blake grumbled. Weiss was one of the students who had simply conked out the moment she was on the bullhead, and team Ruby had been pulled back to the bullhead almost as soon as the bullheads landed thanks to how exhausted Weiss had been. Ruby hadn't been much better, but had brought a few energy gummies along, and the use of her semblance didn't tire Ruby's Aura out nearly as much as the use of her glyphs did Weiss. The little reaper wasn't an Aura monster like the three Arcs, or even Pyrrha or Yang, but she still had some of the better reserves of the freshmen class.

Blake shook her head then, surreptitiously pressing a piece of paper into Harry's hand and then moving away lightly even as she whispered, "That's the contact information you wanted. My parents were willing to talk to you Harry, but don't lie to them or abuse this trust. If you do, if Evig Låga doesn't treat our people right, I'll be coming for you."

Lips quirking, Harry nodded. That was certainly one of the better reasons he'd ever heard to threaten him. But before he could answer verbally, Yang appeared out of the crowd, putting an arm around both of them. "What's this, what's this, secret whisperings, and was that a hug I saw a second ago? Who knew the two of you were so close? Do I have to worry about you forming a little harem, Harry?"

While Blake simply gleeed, her mind too tired to try and come up with a response, Harry shook his head, and was about to say that no, three lovers was more than enough for him thank you and point at Arturia, before adding something along the lines of how all three of his lovers were possessive. Thankfully, he remembered where they were in time, and instead of pointing to Arturia, pointed at Pyrrha. "Are you joking? One girl is enough with all the time I have to spend on leading the team, schoolwork, training, and spending time with my sisters. And even if I was the type to cheat on someone, Pyrrha would probably shove her spear where the sun doesn't shine the moment, she got wind of it."

"Too true," Pyrrha said, smiling and laughing, but also with a hint of steel. The only issue with Arturia and Tia aside, she had no desire whatsoever to share Harry's affections with yet another girl. The night before with Tia had been... Interesting, and certainly opened Pyrrha's mind to the possibilities, but adding still another girl to the relationship it was just not going to happen. "While you are my Rigas, and I your shield, there are some things I would not allow to pass by without response."

"Pity, that would have been kinda hot," Yang shrugged. "And I figure, if you had room for Blake as well, maybe there'd be room for me too." Yang winked causing both Pyrrha and Harry to roll their eyes before she went on with a thoughtful hum. "Unless of course, the fact that you have so many sisters has turned you off blondes entirely. I could see it. Seeing as how little of the reaction I've gotten over the weeks to my flirting from you."

Both Arturia and Tia heard this and smiled faintly, knowing that was in point of fact not the case, but did not move to join the conversation. Tia was walking with Sung-Sun, talking about the battle, and actually giving full paragraph sized comments on what they had seen, as well as some of the weaknesses of the spider and monkey Grimm they had been fighting, she had noticed. Arturia on the other hand was simply walking away with the other professors, heading to meet with Ozpin in his office to give their own impressions of the battle while they were still fresh.

Thankfully, Ozpin would not require a full after action report, not from them anyway. The team leaders though, would unfortunately need to submit one by the end of the week, concentrating

on their own teams rather than the overall battle. Specifically, the team leaders would be asked to comment on how their teams dealt with the sheer violence of the battle.

She turned her attention to other matters. “Now come on Blakey,” Yang whispered, “The cats out of the bag, and I don’t care. I’m just wondering why the cat was in the bag in the first place.”

With that, and with one arm still locked around Blake’s waste so much that the girl couldn’t get away, Yang waved at Harry and the others around, and then marched off in the same direction the plane sized duo had already headed, with Weiss piggybacking on an only mildly protesting Ruby. Yang caught up with them both, slung Weiss onto her other shoulder, and trooped on, uncaring of both Weiss and Blake protesting the treatment volubly to no avail.

“I wonder what that was about?” Harry murmured. *Or... yeah it’s probably the obvious. Yang found out Blake’s faunus secret. Well, it was bound to come out eventually.*

“Besides Yang being Yang you mean?” Pyrrha drawled, taking Harry’s hand in hers and squeezing briefly. “Now come on, I think we need to get some shut eye ourselves. And I believe you promised some chocolatey delight of some kind.”

Since it was now well into the evening with the sun beginning to set, Harry nodded, putting arm around her shoulders and nuzzling into her for a second. “Honestly, I think we all deserve a full feast after that fight. Unfortunately, I don’t think we have enough on hand for that kind of set up. We’ll have to go into Vale for some supplies in the morning.” He smiled, kissing her neck. “Would you like to come with me? I doubt we will be able to make a date of it, but we can spend some time together away from school.”

“That sounds grand,” Pyrrha said excitedly, leaning into his side before both Pyrrha and Harry paused, waiting for Nora to jump up somewhere and shout about pancakes. But that didn’t happen, and instead they stared at the stumbling, near-comatose pair of Ren and Nora as they walked away. “Wow, she must be really out of it,” Harry marveled, causing Pyrrha to nod in shocked agreement followed by the redhead pulling away as Glenda moved towards them.

Glynda did not smile at Pyrrha’s sudden look of apprehension, or show any annoyance with the moment of affection between the pair, that would come after. First, she had a message to deliver. “Mr. Arc, the headmaster would like to see you at your earliest convenience tomorrow.”

Harry frowned, wondering what that was going to be about, and wondering if Ozpin would have any specific questions for him about his powers. He had been forced to use a lot more of his magic over the past two days than he had previously shown after all, and he knew that Glynda had seen some of it. “All right, would the afternoon be appropriate, professor? Or would he like to meet with me early in the morning?”

“I believe the afternoon would be the best time, Mr. Arc. That way you will have had time to recover from our ordeal today. We will see you then.” For a moment, Glenda had hoped that Harry would offer to have her and Ozpin join his team for this feast he was planning, but

something in her tone must have convinced him not to, which she greatly lamented, but could not take back. Instead, she shook her head, nodding to them both with a whispered reminder of keeping the public displays of affection under control, before leaving.

“What do you think the Headmaster wants to talk to you about?” Pyrrha asked.

“Possibly about the full scope of my semblance,” Harry mused, shrugging his shoulders. *Or he might have questions about it, to say the least. I showed more in that fight than I have since coming to Beacon. And the guy does give off some Dumbledore vibes... No, let's wait to put that on him.* “We will see. For now, a quick dinner and then bed for all of us. We've earned an early night in.”

OOOOOOO

To the complete surprise of no one, everyone involved in the Remembrance, even the seniors, had gone straight to bed after having only a simple meal that night. Although, admittedly, only Harry was actually cooking at all that night. The rest had to deal with cafeteria food.

Early the next morning, Harry found himself along with a surprising smattering of students waiting for the first bullhead scheduled to go into Vale. Arturia had gone back to her own apartment the night before, but would meet him and Pyrrha there. Nora and Ren were both still sleeping, something Harry had made a note of. It was obvious Nora's Semblance took a lot out of her with consecutive use.

Next to him was Pyrrha, although she was in disguise at the moment, a disguise consisting of a different hairstyle, her hair being done up in a tight severe bun that looked almost like Glenda's, dyed to look almost brown. That, coupled with a nice sundress, which hid the scars on her arms thanks to a long-sleeved jacket, would hopefully be enough to hide Pyrrha's identity from her fans.

Around them, Harry was surprised to see the solitary figure of Apacci, looking at the other young man quizzically. But Apacci didn't return his gaze, simply standing alone, bobbing his head to music on a pair of headphones that covered his ears. Harry shrugged that off, deciding the youth probably just wanted some alone time. *It must be very hard to be the only boy on a team of three girls after all.*

Although Harry was surprised Apacci didn't even glance at Pyrrha, which Harry knew the other man would do normally, especially if she was wearing something more than the normal Beacon uniform. While he wasn't always open about it, Apacci was a major fanboy for the Invincible Girl.

Another few students were all there, single students for the most part, but amusingly, all of Team RWBY were there. Ruby zipped over to her fellow leader and confided that they wanted a day out on the town, and Weiss in particular wanted to see if any other students for the Vytal

Festival had begun to arrive. “She wants to see if she can spy on them and maybe get a leg up on the competition.”

“I, I do not! I simply believe that it is our responsibility as students at the hosting college to be respectable and to welcome these strange foreign students to Vale and to Beacon in general,” Weiss spluttered.

“In other words, spy on them,” Yang quipped, while Blake shook her head with a sigh.

Harry snorted at that, shaking his head. “You do you, Weiss. And good luck in the tournament if you four decide to take part.”

“The way you said that, it sounds as if you’re not going to take part Loverboy,” Yang said, crossing her arms and looking at Harry in surprise.

“Because I’m not.” Harry shrugged. “I have no desire whatsoever to show off in front of a crowd, and I know Pyrrha’s had more than enough of that in her life.” Pyrrha’s firm nod of agreement was so fast it almost looked as if she had started nodding before Harriet finished speaking. “There’s no prize money, there’s no physical reward for taking part, only for your own pride and that of your school. I don’t see the point of fighting for that kind of thing, especially not in a tournament.”

“Oh my, I do hope that you told your various supporters and more particularly the advertising companies you have made deals with in the past that. I can see that being very big news and very unwelcome news too,” Weiss murmured, hiding her happiness at the fact that they wouldn’t need to fight Team ANVL. Of all the teams they’d seen in action so far, Weiss was confident that her team could fight them on an even footing or beat them. All but Team ANVL. The idea of facing off against Pyrrha was horrifying, and Harry was full of tricks too.

Pyrrha shrugged her shoulders, saying that she didn’t really care one way or the other. All of her endorsement deals had either ended, or would be using stock footage of her going forward. She had no desire whatsoever to renew any of those agreements, and no desire to ever step into a tournament ever again. “While I know that will come as a shock to many of my fans, some things are just not worth it.”

“Besides, this way, I can take Pyrrha home to Evig Låga, and me, Arturia and Tia can introduce her to the rest of the family,” Harry said with a smile at his girlfriend, who blushed rosily but did not say anything negative about that decision. Not that she would. Pyrrha had gotten to know Harry’s family very well, and liked all of them. Instead she moved to stand closer toward him, leaning her head against his shoulder just as the bullhead that would take them into Vale pulled out of the nearby maintenance bay.

As they all took seats in the passenger bullhead, Ruby asked Harry what he was buying. When he explained all four of team RWBY began to drool at the idea of another meal from Harry, and

this one one he even called the feast. Weiss instantly offered to buy some of the food, while Yang offered to help carry things.

Harry was fine with that, as neither he nor Pyrrha or Arturia had decided that this would be a date type situation, simply shopping for things for the meal. At that, Weiss instantly took charge, pulling out a map of Vale and mapping out a route through it to the various stores they would need, both to pick up more dust, more bullets, and so forth after the last two days, which was Ruby and Yang's reasons to go with the team into Vale, and to let Weiss check out the harbor and see if there are any arriving teams yet. The others all looked towards Harry and Pyrrha wonder if they would object to that, but neither of them did, happy to just go along with the other four for now.

Was that by the time they reached Vale's landing zone, they had a full itinerary planned out. When informed of this, Arturia, who was indeed waiting for them, simply shrugged her shoulders and thanked Weiss for taking on the burden of paying for the food. She then began to show Harry pictures of the specific chocolate desserts she wanted to try.

The other girls got into it, each of them pulling out their scrolls and looking for deserts they wanted to try or simply enjoyed. Soon a genteel but ferocious argument began as they each began to try and sell Harry on why their desert was best.

Watching this, Harry laughed quietly, simply enjoying walking next to Arturia and Pyrrha. One arm was around his girlfriend's shoulder, while his other hand sometimes tapped against Arturia's side or thigh, occasionally even taking her hand in his as they walked and the great dessert debate continued.

However, the group ran into a problem at the first store on Weiss's itinerary. This was a dust store close enough to the bullhead landing area where they could buy their purchases and run them back to the landing area, storing it there until they are ready to go back to Vale. Unfortunately, the store was closed.

Specifically, it was closed because someone had apparently robbed the place. If the police line and the two plainclothes detectives standing outside the building were any indication, anyway.

Harry frowned, looking around, wondering where the owner of the store was, stopping when he saw an old man sitting on a bench nearby, staring with dead eyes at the store. He moved over to him, with Pyrrha following. Arturia on the other hand marched towards the two detectives, followed by the others.

It was Ruby who spoke up first, asking "Excuse me, but what happened here?"

"Highway robbery is what happened here Miss," the policeman said, turning around and almost starting to glare at them for coming over to what was a crime scene, but noticing their manner of dress, realize that most of them were huntress is. The one in the sundress with the young man didn't look like it, but the others certainly did.

Next to him, the first officer's partner recognized the Dark Queen, and rapidly backed away slightly even as he elaborated. "The store owner came in this morning to find it smashed up like this, all of his dust gone, all of his distributed distribution tubes smashed. They didn't take anything else, just the dust, which is something we've been seeing a lot of lately."

"Yeah," the other policeman said shaking his head. "But this isn't Roman. He doesn't go into this whole vandalism stuff. He'd rob the place while it's open, force the storeowner to hand over his dust like that, no damages to the store."

The one who had recognized Arturia turned back to his fellow, waving a hand holding a pencil around. "I'm thinking White Fang. What about you?"

"Probably, freaking terrorists!"

Arturia could see that Blake was about to explode at that, while Weiss was nodding her head along sagely. But she didn't particularly care who was behind it, what she cared about was how unprofessional these two were being.

"Excuse me?! Are you or are you not detectives? Why are you trying to create supposition before fact! Your task is not to feed the rumor mill, and certainly not feed anti-faunus sentiment with stupid, ill chosen words," Arturia growled, stalking forward like a lion is about to pounce on her prey. "Did anyone see who did it? Did the camera pick up whoever was breaking into the store? Have you canvased the place for fingerprints. Or did the White Fang call in and take credit for it for some reason?"

The two now thoroughly scared policeman shook their heads, and she finished with a growl of, "In that case, you have no idea who it is! Do not simply spout your own opinion about things especially in such a way that it can be taken as fact by idiots, particularly the idiots in the news business." With a jerk, she gestured to a truck that was coming their way down the street with the logo of one of Vale's news agencies. "If I hear anything about either of you to or the police in general pouring more oil on the fire of anti-faunus sentiment, I will be having words with your police chief, and the mayor about the pair of you..." she then made a point of looking at their ID tags. "Detectives Miller and Munroe."

Since Arturia had met both mayor and police chief in the past, this was not an idle threat. Further, the Dark Queen was well known for giving absolutely no shits whatsoever for procedure or propriety. Something that a lot of police resented, including these two. But they weren't about to say anything with her right in front of their faces, looking as if she could snap both of them in half with a finger, let alone the rest of her body.

With final glare down of the two policeman, Arturia turned to the others, saying she knew where another dust shop was as Harry and Pyrrha made their way over to the rest of the group. "Come along, and let us let these two do some actual work."

The group was silent for a few moments then Yang murmured, "Damn, those two are gonna need some cream for those burns."

"Bah, let them suffer," Arturia scoffed. "Honestly, coming up with a conclusion before even checking the facts, what is the police force around here coming to? I knew they were lacking when I was a student, but that is the height of foolishness..."

"Yet you can't say that they are wrong, can you? It is something the White Fang would do. I know for a fact that the Schnee Dust Company's dust has been targeted by the White Fang occasionally, even from our factories or fully defended trains. Knocking over a small store like that would be child's play for them," Weiss interjected, shaking her head.

"But what would be the point? Why would the White Fang take all that dust without taking any of the money?" Ruby asked.

"That's right! The White Fang are supposed to fight for faunus rights. They are not a criminal organization," Blake shot back hotly.

Harry and his sister exchanged a glance at that, but neither said anything before Weiss replied hotly, "Oh yes, they are! No, wait, they're worse than a criminal organization, they are a terrorist one! How do you think they fund themselves if not illegally? And besides, they have no need to resell dust if they're going to use it for some nefarious purpose!"

"You're just like those two policeman, trying to fit the facts to fit your worldview!" Blake growled, only to fall flat on her face a moment later with a loud "EEP!"

At the same time, Weiss also seemingly tripped over nothing. "Ack!" Only Ruby's quick grab saved her from a similar fate as Blake.

"Well, I think that's proof positive that you can't argue and walk at the same time you two," Yang laughed. "Come on, there's no need to get all worked up about it," she went on, lifting Blake back to her feet, giving her strong shake. *Girl how the hell are you going to keep your secret if you blow up every time someone talks bad about the White Fang?*

Behind team RWBY, Arturia and Pyrrha both looked at Harry, eyebrows rising in amusement, but he didn't look back at them, simply staring straight ahead, whistling a little.

When Weiss attempted to continue the argument a second later, she tripped again, and this time, Ruby wasn't quick enough to grab her. "Why don't we table all of this talk for later," Harry said, moving forward to offer Weiss a hand up. "And like my sister said, let the police actually perform a full investigation before jumping to conclusions. For my part, I would wager this is some kind of copycat group."

The five fresh-girls looked at Harry in confusion, not understanding, but Arturia nodded. "Roman Torchwick has been in the news a lot lately for stealing dust. It would not be

unreasonable to assume that there are other groups that would be able to copy him, if with none of his panache.”

“Say what you will, the man does have a certain style,” Harry admitted soto voce, before speaking up in a louder tone. “Exactly. Now that’s not saying it couldn’t be the White Fang, but it doesn’t mean that it is either. Personally, I can’t see them either working with Roman, or trying to copy a human criminal.”

Blake nodded firmly, while Weiss didn’t look as if she was convinced, but by that point, they had reached the docks.

There, Arturia and Harry broke off for a moment with Ruby to head into an ammunition and dust store. The others walked around, taking in the view of the Seaport for time, with Yang and Pyrrha providing a bulwark between Blake and Weiss, the time passed somewhat peacefully.

For about five minutes.

“Stop thief!” came a shout from nearby. All four of the huntresses turned, watching as a monkey phone is leapt up onto a light along the boardwalk, with several security guards chasing after them. “Get back here you no good stowaway!”

“Hey! I will have you know I am a fantastic stowaway! You only found me when we got to port after all,” the monkey phone is joked, then leapt back away, landing on another light and then heading towards the buildings to one side. “And you’re way too slow to catch me anyway so don’t even bother trying! It’s not like I stole anything after all.”

Blake could feel Weiss looking over at her around Yang and Pyrrha, but refused to give the girl any satisfaction of looking back, instead, simply shaking her head from side to side even as Yang and Pyrrha moved to catch the thief. But the monkey faunus was too agile. Grabbing at a lamppost with his tail he halted his forward momentum which would have carried him into Yang’s arms. Instead he flipped to the side, racing past Blake, giving her a wink.

It looked like he would make it to within jumping range of the nearest rooftop. But then a manhole cover in front of him lifted just enough to trip him up. With a yelp the monkey faunus rolled forward, popping to his feet only for Arturia to suddenly appear in front of him, covering the distance between the door leading into the dust shop and right in front of him before he could blink.

An arm bar grabbed him around the neck, and Arturia locked in her hold, choking him despite his best efforts to get out of her grip.

“G,GGHhh, h, hey now! Is, is there really any reason to go this far? I just stowed away, I lost my wallet that’s allLLG!” The monkey faunus said, as both of his arms came up and tried to pull his arm away, but while she was no Tia or gang, Arturia was deceptively strong for her size. She grunted a bit with effort, but still kept him there as the security guards raced their way

Ruby and Harry joined them and Harry shook his head. Kneeling down, he molded a portion of the ground into stone manacles, clapping them onto the flailing monkey's arm, latching him to the ground. "Really dude, you either have incredibly bad timing, or are just damn stupid. With all the tensions about the White Fang, you choose to try and steal away on a ship? Really?" *And he even looks a bit like a Huntsman-in-training too.*

"Excellent work Arturia, as should be expected of a huntress of your prowess," Weiss said, causing Arturia's eyes to roll even as she released the monkey, who tried to tug free of the stone manacles on his arm only to find the stone was once more solid. "Now return what you stole, thief!"

"Oh my God! He just said he was a stowaway, not even the security guards have called him a thief, Weiss! Where do you get..." Blake began, before Yang not so gently muzzled her with one hand, picking her up with her other arm around the shorter girl's waist.

Harry also rolled his eyes at Weiss, and at his subtle gesture Pyrrha began to push the now protesting Weiss past the monkey faunus, with Harry simply saluting the man and gesturing towards the security guards. "Whatever you've done, we'll leave you with them. Have a nice day."

"Have a...oh, I'm going to get you, dude! I swear! You don't do a man dirty like this and just walk away! I will have my revenge! As soon as I figure out who you are!" The monkey man shouted, which Harry ignored.

Eventually, Weiss was allowed to move under their own power once more and Blake was allowed to speak. Both of them glared at one another, then at the others, hmped, and continued to walk in frosty silence, which was much better in Harry's opinion than their arguing had been. Soon, the group had gone to several grocery stores. Now all of them were burdened by multiple boxes of ammunition, dust, and food bar Weiss and Blake as apology for how the others had kind of manhandled them earlier so they wouldn't argue in front of strangers. When this was explained to them, both girls, who had thought they were not being used as carriers because they weren't as strong as the others until Ruby started to be loaded up with boxes, looked faintly guilty. Blake even apologized for losing her temper, while Weiss just kept on looking guilty.

However, Weiss just could not keep her mouth shut when they passed by a wanted poster for Roman. "I still say that it has to be the White Fang. The White Fang have been stealing dust for a while now, believe me, I know! And Roman's only started to do that in the past year or so. If anything, he might be following their orders. Maybe they have something over him."

"What exactly would that be!? He's a known criminal, Weiss! That's not the kind of person you can actually bribe or blackmail or force into doing your bidding? And will you stop trying to pin things on the White Fang!" Blake shouted, all her earlier anger returning in a rush.

“Never!” Weiss shouted back, actually turning in the street and walking backwards to wag a finger at Blake. “You’re speaking out of ignorance, Blake! You have no idea what the White Fang have done! The number of times I’ve heard of a mine supervisor, of someone on the Board of Directors, or family friends being killed by those, those... animals!”

“And of course there’s no reason for those deaths given ever to you is there princess?!” Blake snarled, her bow moving on her head. “No, whatever wrongdoing your company does to faunus in their mines or their dust factories or how female faunus have to give out sexual favors to their employers, none of that matters to you, does it! The White Fang’s done a lot of bad things, but they’re not alone in that! Faunus are victims too, and your company started it!”

“Ugh, seriously? Come on, Ruby, let’s make sure these two don’t have a catfight right here in the street,” Yang grumbled, her lips twitching even as she did.

As the two sisters got between their teammates, Harry sighed, turning away from a conversation he’d been having with Arturia and Pyrrha about a night on the town in a few weeks, shaking his head. “I would liken those two more to dogs with bones than cats.” Since it had not been his secret to tell, Harry hadn’t even told Pyrrha that he knew that Blake was a faunus, but like Yang had before he honestly wondered how long her disguise would last if she kept on trying to stick up for the White Fang. “Do you think I should interrupt them again?”

Arturia did not answer, simply striding forwards, and clapping a hard hand down on Blake’s shoulder, causing her to stiffen even as Arturia thrust out her other hand, pointing at Weiss as if her finger was a cannon. And considering how Arturia could manipulate her semblance and aura, it might as well be, something that caused Weiss to stop speaking.

“Enough! This is not the time or the place for this discussion. Frankly Weiss, I would think someone of your social standing would understand when not to air your dirty laundry like this. The two of you have differing views on the White Fang and faunus rights, which I understand is something of a retreaded topic with the two of you, argue about it in a private, and try to leave emotions behind, make it one of facts and information, not raw hurt or blind anger. is. You two are teammates, act like it.”

“That’s right! And you should really look where you’re going Weiss. Doesn’t everyone know not to walk backwards?” Ruby asked. “It’s like asking to be jinxed with bad luck.”

The hard grip on her shoulder caused Blake to flinch a bit, while Weiss flinched more at the Dark Queen’s words than anything else, while also ignoring Ruby’s sad pout with difficulty. While she wasn’t nearly as much of a fan of Arturia as she was of Pyrrha prior to coming to Beacon, she still saw the older girl as a role model, and to hear such harsh words from her made Weiss both want to either submit or get her back up and argue back.

Before either instinct could win out in her brain, karma came for Weiss in an ironic manner. She bumped into someone, taking both of them to the ground. “Eep!”

“Told you so!” Ruby exclaimed, rushing forward in a burst of rose petals to help her partner and best friend to her feet as best she could given how she was already carrying several bags.

“Ugh... I apologize,” Weiss grumbled, turning to look down at the girl she’d smacked into. “I was not looking where I was going.”

The girl had not moved since being smacked to the ground, and now smiled up at them happily, waving one hand. She was a short girl, barely taller than Weiss or Ruby, with a boyish body but wearing a green and white skirt and blouse combo. She had ginger hair in curls around her head, and a big, wide, almost unnaturally so, smile. “Salutations!”

“Er... Are you all right?” Yeng asked hesitantly.

“I am completely uninjured,” the girl answered still smiling creepily.

Arturia frowned as she looked at her, and Harry saw the expression, reaching over and squeezing her hand. “Is something wrong?”

“Nothing is wrong, but that voice, it sounds somewhat familiar. Almost as if I’ve heard it in the background at some point while I was talking to someone else.”

Harry nodded, looking over as the girl hopped to her feet at Ruby’s questions. She looked around at the group, her eyes locking on Arturia. “Arturia Arc. The Dark Queen. I’ve never seen you in person, but I always wonder why you turn down Father’s invitations.”

“Excuse me? Who is your Father girl, and what kind of invitations are we talking about?” Arturia asked, nonplussed.

“I am a ward of General Ironwood. He has taken me in, and has talked about you often, and I have to admit to some confusion as well. Surely you know that you could do a lot more good if you join the Atlas army, the resources alone that you would have access to, let alone putting you in a position of authority over others, which you could train or lead into battle would...” Penny began, but Arturia held up her hand, as Weiss looked at the girl in surprise, never having heard that Ironwood had a ward before.

“No. I have not ever, nor will I ever, even in my darkest nightmares join the Atlas military. I dislike Ironwood on a personal level, for reasons I will not go into with you, young lady. For another, I am disgusted by how much effort he and the Atlas government in general has put into distancing the common man from fighting the Grimm or any other threat. It is disgusting to me how much faith he puts in machines over people like you or I. I repeat, I will never work with him,” Arturia said coldly.

Harry watched as the girl flinched, a whole body motion that was almost too much. Further, Harry did not think it was at Arturia’s tone but something else. *I wonder what that is about.*

Arturia also noticed this, and unlike Harry feared it was indeed her tone, so she mellowed her voice slightly, gesturing around them to the other huntresses. “However, if you wish to walk with us for a time, I believe that Weiss said something about needing to pick up better shoes? I have no issue with that whatsoever.”

“Are you, are you inviting me along on an outing? Like, like we were friends?” The girl said, her eyes widening, but not blinking, something that Harry was a little weirded out by.

“Sure,” Ruby said, smiling happily at the girl and holding out her hand, not noticing the rest of her team behind the girl shaking their heads. “Strangers are just friends you haven’t met yet after all. And I could always use more friends. I’m Ruby, this is Weiss, Blake, Yang, Harry, Penelope and Arturia.”

Harry gave Ruby points for remembering to use Pyrrha’s made up name. They were still in public after all and even smiled and waved to Penny Polendina as she introduced herself, grabbing both of Ruby’s hands with her own and shaking them eagerly. He did not, however, appreciate her next comment.

“Oh my! I have heard of these situations, where one boy is always around several girls? This is what they call a love comedy, or is this a harem situation? I’m afraid I don’t know enough about any of you besides Arturia to predict which it is, although I cannot see her in a harem situation unless she is what is called an alpha in some books.”

Harry and Arturia both coughed, while Pyrrha cocked her head thoughtfully to one side, her eyes narrowing at the very idea that Arturia would be the ‘alpha’ in this situation. Ruby, Blake and Weiss had far more volatile reactions, shouting that it was most definitely not either of those. Harry was simply one of very few male friends they had, and the only one who was out and about today.

Penny nodded acceptance even though she looked a little disappointed, and the group continued on.

Thankfully for everyone, the strangeness of Penny and her response to the group was enough to drive their confrontation about the White Fang out of Blake and Weiss’s minds. The rest of the day passed uneventfully, and Harry and the others returned to the landing area laden with groceries of all sorts. An hour and a half later, Harry was finished putting all of the groceries away, and bid Pyrrha, who was trying to get the hair coloring die out of her hair, farewell. Ren would be in charge of prepping the cooking stuff for now.

Harry, unfortunately, had a meeting with the master of the Clocktower to get to.

End Chapter

That's right, sorry, folks but the meeting between the Wonderful Wizard and Harry is not going to happen in this chapter. I wanted it to, but the fighting in the city grew much larger than I expected. Witch I... honestly should have figured. City fighting is fucking brutal guys and girls, it is any good officer's worst nightmare (well, infantry/cavalry officers anyway) and I wanted to show at least a window that chaos even though fighting a group that doesn't have long-range weaponry would make it a LOT easier. Sorry. But this way, I can take my time to get that meeting right, and also put in an Arturia/Harry lemon in the next chapter.