

Jaune had met Yang's mother, and now he was meeting her father. Not the best way to meet a girl's parents.

Taiyang Xiao Long was a tall man with short, blond hair and tanned skin, his body muscled and strong, and under better circumstances, he looked like the sort of person with a warm face. Right now, it was pinched in concern as he watched his eldest daughter sleep, looking small, vulnerable, the hospital bed seemingly swallowing her up. After Yang's arrival at the hospital, her next of kin had been notified and it hadn't taken the man long to arrive.

The situation at the Violet Room had been a shit show, and they'd been questioned by the police extensively. Several members of the Black Lotus had died, and Jaune and Penny's involvement had placed them in a very precarious position, but the security footage at the club had shown that it had been the work of a third party. That wasn't all. A man decked out in full Atlas military uniform had shown up, and with a few words, had managed to untangle them from the mess, though Jaune hadn't seen Penny since. She'd been ushered away, and the last he saw of her had been her sad face, as if apologizing for what had happened.

She didn't need to apologize. She hadn't been the one to drag them into this. That had been his doing.

It was clear that Penny wasn't just some ordinary girl, though. Whoever she was, she was extremely skilled. Not just as a fighter, but her ability to notice the drugs, and remain completely unaffected by them. And the military man that came to fetch her...

...Jaune had a feeling that she was a big deal. A bigger deal than he'd realized, beyond that of just some rich girl. She was friends with Winter Schnee – whom he knew from Weiss was involved in the military – while also having a minder that was also a part of the military.

Maybe she was the daughter of some high ranking official?

Now here he was, a cup of cheap coffee in one hand while a father in distress hovered by his daughter's hospital bed. The doctors assured them that Yang was fine. She just needed to sleep off the effects of the drugs, but it didn't make Jaune feel better.

What they'd been about to do to her...

It made his blood boil, just to think of it.

He had no doubt that her father probably felt worse.

Helpless.

Taking a deep breath, he approached, setting down the cup of coffee beside him. Taiyang looked up briefly in acknowledgement but didn't say a word, returning to his steady vigil. They'd not spoken, though a silent understanding had passed between them.

Jaune retreated to the hallway where Ruby was waiting for him.

Something about the sight of little Ruby Rose sitting in a dreary hospital hallway, her feet kicking back and forth was incredibly *wrong*. He hated it.

"It's not your fault," she said again, for what must have been the umpteenth time.

Jaune smiled weakly. "It feels like it."

“I know how Yang can be,” she said. “When she sets her mind on something, there isn’t anyone that can stop her.”

He sat down beside her, and Ruby placed her hand on his knee, patting it gently. He appreciated the comfort, giving her hand a quick squeeze, her hand turning over to grip his and not let go.

They sat together in silence for a long time, simply holding hands. Ruby was taking everything remarkably well, showing a maturity well beyond her years but it wasn’t completely unexpected. She’d shown him already how strong she was in the face of adversity, her mental toughness. He knew that she must be worried for her sister, yet she wasn’t letting those emotions control her, even giving her father time alone with Yang.

But eventually, curiosity won over.

“What happened?” she asked quietly.

“That’s something I would like to know,” a voice said from the doorway, and they both jumped, spotting Taiyang standing there, listening. “Why were you at that nightclub, a known gangster hotspot?”

Jaune knew Yang wouldn’t want him to spill the beans but this wasn’t something he could avoid or lie about, so he told the truth. He started from the beginning, everything from her strange silence and not answering his text messages, to the strange things Ruby found in her room, to finding her extorting thugs for information and everything that followed. Taiyang’s face was blank all the way through, not a hint of his thoughts on his face as he spoke about meeting with the Vassari, and then the Black Lotus – and then what occurred there; the drugging, how Jaune had found her, the fight, and the appearance of Raven.

*That* got a reaction. Taiyang's expression narrowed, becoming severe, while Ruby stared at him with wide eyes.

"Raven," Taiyang sighed, shaking his head. "I can guess what happened next."

Massacre.

"We fought briefly, and talked," Jaune revealed. "And then she left."

"And she didn't kill you? Impressive," the man looked troubled. "Did Yang see her?"

"I don't know. She was already heavily impaired by the drugs. I'm not sure how much she saw, or even knew what was happening."

Taiyang grimaced. "Damn it, Yang..."

He began pacing, running his hands through his hair.

"Sir," Jaune began tentatively. "How was it that she was there? As much as I want to deny it, it almost felt like she *knew* Yang was in danger, and came to save her."

It felt like he was giving that horrible woman too much credit, but with some time to think it over, isn't that exactly what happened? Her vile words said one thing, her actions said another.

Taiyang grunted. "Her semblance... it's called Kindred Link. She can create portals that lead her to people that she has emotionally bonded with," he said bitterly.

That sounded like a bad joke.

"It also gives her a sixth sense. She knows when those she has bonded with are in mortal peril."

So that explained her sudden appearance, but Jaune had trouble reconciling the woman that called Yang weak and pathetic, and someone who would rush to her defence to save her life. Raven Branwen was one giant contradiction.

Taiyang hesitated. "I just realized I don't know your name..."

"Oh, uh," Jaune quickly stood, offering a hand. This was a little embarrassing, his Ma had taught him better than that. "Jaune. Jaune Arc. I'm a friend of Yang and Ruby's. I go to Beacon, on a different team."

"Jaune," he sounded out. "So this is the boy you've been telling me about."

Ruby flushed, hopping to her feet. "Daaad! Stop right now!"

“Don’t worry, she’s only said good things about you,” Taiyang shook his hand, his grip firm. “Though she goes on and on about you a little too much.”

“Stop!” Ruby roared, rushing her father. The pair of them wrestled, and the sudden shift in mood gave Jaune a little bit of whiplash, but he was happy to see it. Ruby thrashed as her father effortlessly tied her up, locking her arms behind her back.

While Ruby continued to squirm and attempt escape, Taiyang fixed him with a serious look. “Thank you for being with her.”

“Oh, um – of course.”

“I know how my daughter can be,” he continued, mirroring Ruby’s words from earlier. “Impulsive, rash. I love her dearly, but she isn’t perfect, and if there is trouble to be had, you can be sure she’ll get herself into it. But really, thank you – it makes me feel better, knowing she has such great friends looking out for her.”

Jaune nodded, touched. “Anytime, sir.”

“No sir – call me Tai. Sir makes me sound like an old man.”

“You are an old man!” Ruby seethed, her struggle futile. “Let me go!”

“You started this, you little brat,” Tai mocked. “I’m just defending myself.”

“Arggh~!”

Jaune laughed. It felt good to do it, after the night he'd had.

It was a long night spent at the hospital. None of them slept, and so they talked. About happier things. Anything to take their minds off Yang's current state.

Tai was a teacher at Signal, the preparatory school found on Patch. He'd trained Yang since she was little and continued when she joined Signal officially, a master of hand-to-hand combat. It was where she got her fighting style from, though he admitted that she employed a much more wild variant.

“I could never quite hammer home the need for control into that thick head of hers,” Tai joked, shaking his head. “All she ever wanted to do was punch things, harder the better.”

Ruby was trained by their uncle, Raven's brother; Qrow. He also had a scythe and that was what had inspired the creation of Crescent Rose. It also explained why the two sisters had such wildly different fighting styles.

“This little munchkin is hopeless without her toy,” Tai mussed her hair and Ruby squawked in outrage, slapping his hands away furiously.

“It isn't a toy! Crescent Rose is the best!”

“I've tried to teach her how to fight without it but it just never sticks.”

“I don’t *need* to know how to fight like a brute,” she muttered petulantly.

“It’ll come back to bite you, Ruby. I wish you’d listen. What do you think, Jaune?”

Jaune really wished Tai wouldn’t place him in this position! Ruby’s wide, silver eyes turned on him, begging to take her side – but Tai was right.

“You should listen to your father.”

“Betrayer!” Ruby accused, pointing at him dramatically. “How could you? I thought we were friends!”

“I’m just saying it’s a glaring weakness, that’s all,” Jaune reasoned but she wasn’t listening, covering her ears.

“I can’t hear you!”

Jaune snorted.

Mature beyond her years? Yeah, right! When she acted like this, Jaune doubted that statement completely!

“See what I have to deal with? Two daughters who don’t listen,” Tai gave a long suffering sigh. “What am I going to do with them?”

Jaune spoke about his training a little bit, and about the man who took him under his wing.

“He always talked about mastering my weapon so that if everything else failed me, my sword wouldn’t. He’d make me stand in one spot and swing it for hours on end, until my arms felt like they wanted to fall off. Then we would spar, even though I could barely lift my sword, my shoulders hurt that much. He could be a bit of a slave driver.”

“A wandering Huntsman, huh?” Tai smiled. “You’re lucky you were able to convince one to train you. They can be a grumpy bunch. There’s a reason they spend all their time outside the kingdoms, moving from place to place. What was his name?”

“Bruno,” Jaune said. “No last name, as far as I know. He went to Beacon.”

Tai blinked. “Oh – old Bruno? Now that’s a name I haven’t heard in a long time.”

“You know him?”

Tai nodded, smiling. “Bit of a loner but a good Huntsman. You couldn’t have asked for a better teacher.”

“He always claimed to be the weakest in his class,” Jaune revealed.

“Sounds like Bruno. Maybe he was, but that isn’t what’s important. Being a Huntsman is about more than grades or winning sparring matches, and he’s been doing this long before I graduated Beacon myself. No Huntsman that reaches his ripe old age could ever be accused of

being weak. This isn't a profession with a long life expectancy. Some get there, some don't – *most don't*. That's just the nature of our job."

They moved onto lighter topics; embarrassing stories.

"Dad, no~!" Ruby covered her face, mortified, as Tai regaled him with the time Ruby refused to put her clothes on after bath time and ran around the house naked for hours on end, bouncing off the walls in a sugar high.

"What did you call your dress? A prison?" Tai chortled as Ruby began hitting him, and Jaune couldn't stifle his own laughter. "*I will not be imprisoned!*" he mimicked her voice.

"I didn't say that!" Ruby whined.

Yang also had her fair share of tales that she'd want kept buried in the past but Tai was more than willing to dig a few of them up. It had to be karma, cosmic retaliation for prying Weiss' childhood horror stories out of Penny.

Most of them were pretty mild, situations where Yang wasn't listening and made a fool of herself in front of the class, or said something stupid in full confidence, or how apparently, she liked to eat lipstick when she was younger, so Tai had to make sure there was none in the house for years.

But perhaps the worst story came from Ruby. Little sisters knew things that parents never would.

"She threw up on a boy she kissed."

Jaune stared at her, horrified. Even Tai recoiled.

“She *what?*”

“There was a boy she liked, so she told him to meet her behind the bleachers after school. I overheard her and so followed them after the bell,” Ruby admitted. “She tried to confess to him but got tongue tied, so then tried to kiss him to get her point across. Their lips touched for a second and then she threw up on his face.”

She said it so matter-of-fact that Jaune’s brain struggled to comprehend what it was that it was hearing.

“He wouldn’t speak to her after that,” Ruby continued. “I think she scared him – but he never told any of his friends, or anyone else at school. If he did, everyone would have known about it but it was never spoken of.”

Jaune felt the full force of second hand embarrassment wash over him, burying his face in his hands.

“When was this?” Tai asked, perplexed.

“My first year at Signal.”

“*Who* was it?”

Ruby frowned. "I'm not telling!"

"Ruby..."

"You'll be dumb and give him a hard time if you see him. Yang threw up on him! Isn't that enough?"

Tai sulked.

He was being denied overprotective father privileges.

"I just want to know who kissed my little girl, that's all."

"She kissed him," Ruby reminded him. "For one second, and then she vomited on him. He's been punished enough."

"I don't know if you should have told us that one," Jaune admitted, cringing.

Ruby shrugged. "I was just going with the flow."

Jaune was suddenly glad that he was the youngest sibling, and didn't have any younger sisters. Younger sisters were scary. Older sisters were bad enough.

He told a few stories of his own, about how they'd dress him up in dresses and braid his hair, and even put makeup on him. Ruby giggled, thoroughly enjoying it while Tai just appeared shocked.

"Eight children..." he said faintly. "Two little terrors were enough. How does anyone deal with *eight*?"

"When the first couple aged up, they basically took over a lot of the duties," Jaune supplied. "Like getting us washed and dressed in the morning, if my Ma had to help my Pa on the farm."

At some point, the conversation waned and Jaune found himself dozing off, right there on those uncomfortable joint chairs in the hallway. He flitted in and out of consciousness, awoken at random by hospital staff hurrying past, but lulled back to sleep by the soft warmth resting against his side.

It wasn't until a loud, metallic clang sounded that he jolted, wide awake.

Jaune looked around in a panic, blinking blearily before recognizing that the sudden commotion was coming from Yang's room. The soft warmth against his side flailed, and with a bit of surprise, he realized it was Ruby.

"Whazzgoingon?" she slurred, wiping at her chin. She'd been drooling in her sleep, and he felt a wet patch on his shoulder.

"I think Yang is awake," Jaune stretched before standing, offering Ruby a hand. She took it and stood up, smiling at him before they both cringed, hearing Yang's raised voice.

“Where am I?” she shouted, followed by something crashing to the floor.

Tai was nowhere to be seen, which was weird, which left them to see what was going on. When they entered her room, Yang was on the floor, her face filled with panic until she noticed them, instantly calming down.

“Jaune?” she croaked. “Ruby? What...?”

“Hey,” he said gently, rushing to her side. She was dressed in a hospital gown, and the back had opened when she fell to the floor. He steadfastly ignored the sight of her panties cupping her butt, and the creamy, pale skin of her back, hooking an arm under her pit while Ruby did the same on the other side.

“Hup~!” Ruby said as they dragged her off the floor and sat her down on the bed. Yang grabbed at her head, rubbing her temples in soothing circles.

“What the hell is going on? Why am I in the hospital?”

Jaune blinked.

Did she not remember?

He shared a look with Ruby who shrugged, clearly lost.

“Yang... at the club, they spiked your drink,” he said slowly, and she stared at him dumbly.

“*What?*”

“They tried to drug all of us, but I didn’t have any and Penny – well, Penny is... Penny?” Jaune shrugged. “Apparently drugs don’t work on her or something, I don’t know, but we knew something was going down when those Vassari guys made a move. They were...” he hesitated.

“They were what?” she pressed.

“When I got there... they were undressing you.”

Yang blanched.

At that moment, the nurses arrived. Apparently her escape from the bed had triggered some alarm, and they swarmed around her, pushing Jaune and Ruby aside. They bombarded her with questions and ran a bunch of tests before a doctor turned up alongside Tai.

“Dad, where have you been?” Ruby demanded.

He held up a hot pocket. “I got hungry, so I went to the cafeteria,” he tried to play it off, but Jaune could see the relief in his eyes as they settled on Yang. “I see she’s awake.”

“Dad?” Yang asked in disbelief. “What are you doing here?”

“What do you think I’m doing here?” Tai asked roughly. “My stupid daughter got in over her head and got into more trouble. I thought you’d learned your lesson about going to shady night clubs, but obviously not.”

“I hate to break this up,” the doctor cut in dryly before Yang could retaliate. “But I’d like to see the patient first before you start disciplining her decisions.”

Jaune and Ruby left the room, but Tai stayed, remaining with his daughter as they conducted some more tests.

“Are you hungry?” he asked, and Ruby’s stomach grumbled loudly, her cheeks flushing cutely.

“Yeah,” she said quietly. “Want to go get something?”

It took them a little while to find the cafeteria, following the signs. There was a small kiosk that served pre-made sandwiches and rolls, hot pockets and pizza slices. There were also a number of vending machines, supplying everything from drinks to chips to candy.

“What do you feel like? My treat,” he said.

He wasn’t sure why he even asked. Ruby went straight for the candy, and ended up with a bunch of chocolate bars, though she *did* supplement those with a hot pocket filled with meat and cheese, and a savory sauce. Jaune got one as well, since he’d never tried one before and was curious, and a bag of chips.

“Drinks?”

“I’ll have the orange soda,” Ruby pointed to it.

Jaune took the grape.

A breakfast of champions it was *not*.

The lady at the kiosk heated their hot pockets, and Jaune almost burned his tongue biting into it too soon.

“You have to wait until it cools down, or you’ll blister your mouth,” Ruby chided him with a snicker, already munching on one of her chocolate bars.

“Chips it is,” he quipped, popping the bag open and digging in.

When they finished their feast, they made their way back to Yang’s room where father and daughter were in heated discussion. They paused when they noticed they had company, and then to Jaune’s surprise, he saw Yang look away, her expression ashamed.

“Is everything okay? Did the tests go well?” he asked.

She refused to look at him.

“She’s fine,” Tai said, sighing. “A little dizzy and needs to drink a whole lot of water, they want to keep her here for a few more hours but then she can go home. It’s just...”

“Just what?” Ruby asked when her father didn’t elaborate.

It was Yang that answered.

“I can’t remember anything,” she muttered. “The last thing I remember is meeting Penny out on the street, and then next thing I know, I’m waking up here.”

That didn’t sound good. “Is that normal?”

“According to the doctor, it’s a common side effect of these types of drugs,” his voice was calm, but there was no missing the murderous intent buried deep within. Jaune couldn’t blame him. They’d hurt his little girl, and might have done much worse if Jaune hadn’t been on time. “It’s just one of those things.”

Yang gripped her blanket in a white knuckled grip and remained silent after that, eyes focused on the wall.

When the detectives arrived, having been alerted to Yang’s improved condition, he and Ruby were ushered out of the room.