

The next day, classes were canceled in preparation for the other schools arriving. Students were put to work, helping to clean classrooms and hallways alongside the hired staff, sweeping outdoor corridors and courtyards, and even trimming trees and picking flowers to fill vases that decorated the amphitheater. An assembly was to be held in the afternoon, Shade, Mistral, Atlas and Beacon all in attendance. Then there was word of a tour; a tour of Beacon for the visiting students, and a tour of Amity Colosseum.

Jaune found himself outdoors, sweeping one of the courtyards and raking leaves into a large sack. Blake had been with him, but she was currently hauling an already filled sack to the green waste dump point.

It meant he was alone.

That was when she found him.

A strange sort of jingle played behind him, startling him from his mindless sweeping. It reminded him of the sort of noise you'd hear in a video game when you completed a mission or quest, or attained victory in a battle. Spinning around, a familiar freckled face framed by ginger hair met his eyes.

"Penny!" he exclaimed happily, dropping his broom. "You're here!"

Her smile was filled with teeth, beaming back at him joyfully.

"Friend Jaune~!" she shouted, hands on hips. She looked very proud of herself. "Daily complete! Bum bum bum!"

What?

Before he could ask what her strange words meant, she stepped forward and embraced him in a backbreaking hug. Jaune choked as the air was forced from his lungs, yet his arms instinctively wrapped around her in return, hugging her back.

“I apologize for not replying to your communications,” she said, *lifting him off the ground*. Jaune let out a strained laugh as she swung him around before putting him down, her eyes glittering with warmth. “Please don’t be mad!”

“I’m not mad, Penny,” he extracted himself from her brutal hold. She was even stronger than Nora was, which was saying something, and it took quite a bit of force to escape. “I was worried! You didn’t get in trouble, did you?”

“I did,” she nodded, not appearing very sorry about it. “I was scolded thoroughly for my participation!”

That made him feel bad. “Penny, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean for that to happen.”

She shook her head quickly. “Do not worry, Friend Jaune. I do not regret what happened. If I had the chance to do things over, I would still make the same decision. A hero stands by their ideals!”

Jaune chuckled. “Well, I hope things weren’t too bad on your end.”

She was about to say something when she paused, her eyes darting behind him. “Oh! Watch out, Jaune. An NPC approaches with a possible quest.”

Huh?

Turning, Jaune was greeted by a dark skinned girl with straight, dark teal hair arranged in an asymmetrical bob, a blue beret perched atop her head. She wore a white, asymmetrical button down shirt with golden buttons, a blue pleated combat skirt and black, fingerless elbow-length gloves. As she approached, her sharp blue eyes analyzed him before shifting to Penny in annoyance.

“I am not an NPC,” she corrected, voice clipped. “Cease this nonsense at once.”

“I need to fill out her affection meter more,” Penny claimed, which only confused Jaune, and made the newcomer roll her eyes.

“Uh,” Jaune looked back and forth between them. “Are you a friend of Penny’s?”

“In a manner of speaking, I suppose,” the girl locked eyes with him. “You are Jaune Arc.”

“Uh, yes – I mean, yeah, that’s me,” Jaune offered a hand. “And you are?”

“Ciel Soleil, Atlas Academy,” she hesitated before taking his hand, shaking it firmly, before answering his unasked question. “I know who you are because Penny has given me detailed descriptions including hair and eye color, height, weight and general facial features.”

Jaune blinked. “Oh – she did, did she?”

How'd she know his weight? Now he felt a little self conscious. At least with height, she could eyeball it somewhat.

“She says you are friends.”

Jaune nodded. “We are.”

“He is my first boy friend,” Penny chimed in. “On our first combat quest, we took down a club of gangsters and saved the damsel. She was not moved to another castle.”

Penny said odd things at the best of times, but she was really throwing him off this time.

Ciel spotted his expression and clarified, “While it may sound like she is talking gibberish, I assure you, she is not. Penny is simply easily influenced, and has spent the last month and a half playing video games. RPG’s, for the most part. A waste of time. It has, unfortunately, colored her speech patterns.”

“I have learned the path of becoming a hero,” Penny completely ignored Ciel’s disapproval. “The holy texts showed me the way. My Blinding Light will defeat all evil.”

Jaune grinned, amused. “Well, if anyone can be a hero, Penny – it’s you.”

Penny perked up, eyes crinkling as she smiled widely. “I knew Friend Jaune would understand. He also walks the path of the hero. We are kindred spirits. Now all we need is a horrible tragedy to complete our transformation into one who saves the world.”

Jaune laughed awkwardly. "How about we skip the tragedy and save the world anyway? How does that sound?"

Her smile softened. "Though it builds character, I would much rather no tragedy occur either."

"Hm. I see, so not only can you understand her, but you can also speak on her level," Ciel gave him an appraising look. "It appears that there is more to you than I thought."

"Uh, thanks?"

"I would not necessarily call it a compliment," she then checked her watch. "Penny, we are behind schedule due to this detour. We are meant to be meeting with General Ironwood in two minutes, and it will surely take longer to navigate unfamiliar ground. I do not wish to be late!"

"Where are you supposed to be meeting him?" Jaune asked. "I can point you in the right direction."

"I believe he is meeting us in the amphitheater."

"You aren't far away, then," Jaune said, giving them directions. "You'll be cutting it close unless you run."

"Then we shall run," Penny said loudly. "Thank you for your help, Friend Jaune. I will find you afterwards and help you complete your quest. We shall party up!"

She then took off at a sprint without waiting for his answer, or Ciel's. The dark skinned girl sighed, shaking her head, but ran after her, the pair quickly vanishing from view.

That had been... weird.

It was good to see Penny again, though. She looked well, and was as strong as ever. Jaune rubbed his back. Hopefully they could hang out afterwards and catch up.

Jaune regathered his broom and started sweeping again, creating a pile of leaves and twigs before shoveling them into the sack. Blake returned soon after, and together, they ended up cleaning the courtyard quickly.

"This isn't exactly what I thought I'd be doing when I signed up to become a Huntress," Blake grumbled good naturedly. Sacks in hand, Jaune accompanied her this time to the green waste dump point.

"It makes sense they would take advantage of all this free labor on hand, though," Jaune chuckled. "I suppose this might come in handy. What if we need to infiltrate a place and pretend to be hired help?"

Blake scoffed. "Well, you'd fail. Your Stealth and Security grade is almost as bad as your Dust Usage grade."

"Hey..."

She giggled. "It's fine. You can't be good at everything."

"I'm really trying, you know!"

"I know," Blake said fondly, bumping him with her hip. "We all have different skills. You just aren't very sneaky."

"On the other hand, you are," he ribbed back.

They continued to snip at each other until they dumped their sacks at the required dump spot. A few other students were loitering around, taking a break.

Jaune raised a hand. "Hey Ruby."

"Jaune!" she looked miserable with leaves in her hair, and were those grass stains on her skirt?
"Save me!"

Pyrrha laughed.

"What happened?" he asked, curious.

Ruby pouted while Pyrrha explained, "We were cleaning one of the gardens and she slipped down the bank. She was distracted, watching one of the visiting students."

“I was watching Reese skate,” Ruby muttered, cheeks turning red. “She was *really good!* She did a 360 kickflip like it was nothing!”

Jaune had no idea what that meant.

“Do you like skating?” Blake asked.

Ruby nodded awkwardly. “A little... I tried to learn how when I was younger but I wasn’t very good. I’m too clumsy. It looks so cool, though! Ahh, I wish I could do it.”

As time for their assembly closed in, they made their way back to their dorms to shower and change into their Beacon uniforms. Weiss and Nora were already waiting for them, freshly showered and in the process of getting dressed.

He let Blake go first, grabbing a towel and his uniform before sitting on his bed. He tried not to stare but it was difficult, Weiss’ sculpted ass drawing his eye as she bent over and began pulling on a pair of thigh-high socks. She didn’t usually wear those type, but it gave him a complete view of her lacy white panties wedged between her plump cheeks.

During the first semester, she would have dressed in the bathroom to avoid this sort of situation. Their relationship was much different now, though. Not just between him and her, but between all of them. She was no longer shy about Nora or Blake seeing her body.

Nora winked at him, catching him looking. Jaune felt his cheeks grow warm.

“It’s a good show, right?” Nora grinned.

Weiss looked up. “What?”

“Jaune’s staring at your butt.”

He thought about denying it, but... what was the point?

Weiss glanced over her shoulder at him, her cheeks flushing lightly. But she didn’t cover up, simply rolling her socks up her slender, toned legs.

When Blake was done showering, Jaune entered and washed off. Quickly drying, he applied deodorant, pulled on his uniform and brushed his hair to the best of his ability before returning to the bedroom. Weiss was waiting for him.

“Let me do that,” she said, reaching for his loose tie.

Jaune didn’t fight her, standing still as her hands deftly looped it and pulled it through, tightening it and pulling down the collar.

“There,” she said proudly.

“Look at her,” Nora fake-whispered as Blake pulled on her shoes. “She’s acting like his wife.”

Blake snickered as Weiss glared at them.

“So what?” Weiss sniffed.

“You’ll have to share those duties,” Nora needed. “But that won’t be a problem, right? You’re good at sharing his cock.”

Weiss flushed scarlet. “Would you *not*? There is no need to be so vulgar.”

“Says the girl who passed out piston-fucking Jaune-Jaune like he was a piece of meat,” Nora teased, Weiss’ ears going red as Blake laughed loudly.

“I will not listen to this!” Weiss stormed over to the door. “I will see you at the assembly.”

“It’s so fun teasing her,” Nora said happily as she left. “Our cute little sheltered rich girl is such a degenerate!”

Jaune sighed. “Maybe you shouldn’t tease her about that so much.”

“Why? It’s really funny,” Nora grinned toothily. “And it was *really* hot. Jaune-Jaune, your cock is really dangerous, you know that, right? It drives us wild, sometimes we get a little out of hand with it.”

“Right, well, I’ll see you guys there,” he said, Nora laughter cutting off as she shut the door behind him. He jogged down the hallway to catch up with Weiss.

“Want any company?” he asked. She looked at him in surprise before her face softened.

“Always,” she said, walking a little closer to him so their hands brushed.

The amphitheater was quickly filling up. Students of all four schools were present, and Jaune took the opportunity to observe them. The Atlas students were easily identifiable. The girls wore gray sleeveless jacket vests and matching skirts with white belts, dark gray ties and light gray, long-sleeved shirts and stockings with knee-high black boots. The boys wore gray jacket vests with crisp white long-sleeved shirts and white trousers with matching belts, and polished black dress shoes. Some of them wore gloves, while others did not.

There was very little color on display.

Except for one girl he spotted with bright orange hair pulled up into large puffy twintails, parts of her fringe dyed a shocking neon blue. It was so unexpected in the sea of white and gray that it made Jaune pause, staring at her in surprise. She didn’t look very pleased with her uniform, fidgeting and tugging at the material, her face pinched in annoyance.

The Haven students were dressed in black jackets with light gray trim around the edges, and a white undershirt with a white band around their left arms. The boys wore matching trousers, black with a gray stripe down the sides, and polished black shoes, while the girls instead wore gray and black checkered skirts, white knee-high socks and black Mary Janes.

This is where he spotted Sun who looked *extremely* uncomfortable in his uniform, standing stiff backed with an awkward grimace on his face. It was the first time he’d seen the blond in anything other than his open white shirt, and wouldn’t have recognized him at first if it wasn’t for the long monkey tail that swished behind his back, agitated.

There was a blue haired boy by his side who didn't seem to notice Sun's discomfort, chatting away happily, wearing the same uniform but somehow wearing it better. A pair of goggles sat perched on his head, the lenses tinted yellow.

Whoever it was must have felt Jaune's stare because he glanced over.

"Sun doesn't look pleased," Weiss pointed out, lips quirked in amusement. "He appears very uncomfortable."

"Extremely," Jaune agreed.

The boy haired boy shifted his focus to Weiss, blinking in surprise before shooting her a wink. Weiss' amused grin faded away, replaced by a scowl.

Jaune snickered.

"What are you laughing at?" Weiss grumbled. "You should be filled with jealousy."

The students from Shade stood out the most – simply because of their lack of uniform. Jaune immediately spotted Team NDGO who were dressed in their usual combat attire, and it seemed that was how the student body always dressed at their school. It made them the most colorful of the gathered students, and the most at ease.

Gwen spotted him and waved, but he didn't dare wave back. Weiss' scowl deepened.

“Yo, wassup,” Yang appeared suddenly, throwing an arm across the back of his neck and dragging him down. She then whistled. “Damn, look at everyone.”

Ren strolled up calmly. “The future Huntsmen of Remnant.”

Ruby and Pyrrha followed close behind, Blake and Nora joining them soon after. More students streamed inside; Jaune caught sight of Cardin’s head towering over everyone else, and then Yatsunashi, Velvet’s teammate, towering over Cardin. He saw Velvet’s ears bob up and down as she followed along, Coco and Fox no doubt nearby. Team ABRN was next, Jaune’s eyes drawn instantly to Arslan’s platinum mane. And then...

“Bum bum bum~! Location reached,” Penny chirped, marching through the crowd, effortlessly knocking people aside. A few Shade students glared at her but having felt her strength as she carelessly pushed them out of the way they thought better of it, choosing to grumble amongst themselves.

“Penny,” Jaune greeted happily, looking her up and down. No longer dressed in her usual cute dress, she now wore the Atlas Academy uniform. He thought she looked better in her dress. The muted colors didn’t suit her at all.

“Penny!” Yang exclaimed, releasing Jaune and darting forward. Penny blinked as Yang hugged her, and after a moment, hugged her back, bending her spine.

“*Woah!*” Yang grunted. “Damn, I forgot how strong you are.”

“Friend Yang!” Penny said warmly. “Salutations!”

“Salutations to you! Where have you been? I’ve been worried about ya.”

They released one another and Penny stepped back, bowing her head.

“I apologize. As you can see, I am well.”

“So – this is her, huh?” Nora asked as she approached, leaning in close and eyeing Penny up and down. Penny stared at her, perplexed. “Oh, wow – she’s a cutie. Jaune, you never said she was Ruby-cute.”

Ruby flushed. “Nora!”

“You are also cute,” Penny returned the compliment before looking around at all his friends. “My name is Penny Polendina. I am Jaune’s girl friend, and he is my first boy friend.”

A few of them had stunned faces at that proclamation, namely Weiss, Ruby and Pyrrha. Yang just laughed while Blake and Nora shot him cheeky looks.

Ren stepped forward and offered his hand. “Lie Ren.”

Penny took his hand and shook it, making him wince.

“Can we be friends?” she asked earnestly.

Ren looked a little taken aback at the instant request for friendship but nodded. “A friend of Jaune’s is a friend of mine.”

That strange jingle sounded again, the one that was pulled straight from a video game. It was coming from Penny, but he didn’t know *where*. Her scroll? He wasn’t the only one startled. They all shot her looks of surprise.

“Excellent! Another boy friend acquired,” Penny exclaimed happily. “That makes two. I am now closer to completing my quest of one hundred friends!”

“One hundred!” Ruby said loudly, looking faint at the very thought. “That’s so many!”

Penny was a little strange, but his friends took to her quickly as he knew they would. She was just an extremely likable person, her face lighting up as she added to her tally of friends, doubling it in short order.

“Weiss Schnee,” Penny bounced up and down excitedly, clapping her hands. “I am acquainted with your older sister, Winter. She is a friend of mine!”

“I’ve heard,” Weiss dropped into a curtsy. “It is a pleasure to meet a friend of my sister. I hope we can become good friends as well.”

“I am also fond of sharks! Though I do not have a Mr. Tooth to call my own!”

Yang covered her laugh with a hand while Jaune coughed. Weiss frowned.

“How do you know about...?”

But before she could question how Penny knew about her stuffed shark, the chatter throughout the room quieted as Professor Goodwitch took to the stage, her mere presence immediately demanding attention. Even the students from the other schools clammed up, sensing that she was not a woman to trifle with.

“I am Professor Glynda Goodwitch,” she announced loudly, her voice carrying in the sudden silence. “Please give a warm welcome to your host, the Headmaster of Beacon Academy, Ozpin.”

Polite applause filled the amphitheater as the Headmaster walked across the stage, his ever present cane in hand. It tapped against the floor with every step, and Jaune felt the tension in the room thicken as the foreign students got their first sight of what many said was the strongest Huntsman in the world.

He came to a stop at the edge of the stage, looking out over them with calm. Both hands curled atop his cane as he leaned on it.

“Today we stand together, united,” he began, voice quiet – and yet he may as well have shouted the words for every one stood straighter. “Mistral. Atlas. Vacuo. Vale. The four kingdoms of Remnant. Near to this day, almost one hundred years ago, the largest war in recorded history came to an end. It was a war of ignorance, of greed, and of oppression. A war that was about much more than where borders fell or who traded with whom. But about the very idea of individualism itself.”

The weight of his words felt heavy, delivered in his somber voice.

“We fought for countless reasons. One of which being the destruction of all forms of art and self expression. And, as you are well aware, that was something many could not stand for. As a result, those who opposed this tyranny began naming their children after one of the core aspects of art itself; color.”

Ozpin paused, observing them quietly for a long moment. As if searching for something only he could see.

“That was their way to demonstrate that not only would they refuse to tolerate this oppression but neither would the generations to come – and it is a trend that holds to this very day. We encourage individualism, expressionism, and unity – through diversity. As I have said, today we stand together, united. But this bond cannot exist without effort. Which is why in the coming month, while the rest of the world celebrates peace, Huntsman and Huntresses will work to uphold it.”

A wry smile graced his lips then, the first hint of emotion.

“We have a duty to continue the work of our forbearers, and so – I welcome you all to Beacon, and eagerly await that which you have yet to show me. Of your grit, of your courage, and of your desire to protect what we have. Thank you.”

This time, the applause was more than simply polite. Jaune knew Ozpin to be an eccentric man, and not necessarily an inspirational one even though his presence was significant. But his speech had awoken something in many of them, and the clapping only grew louder as he left the stage. He was replaced by Professor Goodwitch, Professor Peach and Professor Port.

“Rooms have been prepared, and you will now be escorted to your accommodations whereupon you will be supplied with everything you will require during your stay here at Beacon,” Goodwitch said. “To my left is Professor Port,” she gestured to the rotund man whose mustache bristled in excitement. “He will be escorting the students of Shade Academy.”

“Come along, students, come along,” Port said loudly, hopping down off the stage with the grace of a much younger and leaner man. “As we walk, allow me to regale you of tales both grand and true.”

The students from Shade hesitated, no doubt thrown off by the oddity in front of them before following behind their Grimm Studies instructor as he began talking about his favorite subject; himself.

Yang snickered. “Now that’s just cruel. Professor G is utilizing psychological warfare against the other schools.”

“To my right is Professor Peach,” Goodwitch continued, waving to the young, pretty Professor beside her. “She will be escorting the students of Haven Academy.”

Jaune heard someone whistle in appreciation, no doubt happy about the choice for their school. Peach smiled, only enhancing her beauty further as she hopped down off the stage, her sundress fluttering tantalizingly around her slim legs.

“Come along, students, follow me,” she called, charming the boys instantly with her voice. The girls were less impressed, glaring at their classmates as they followed her out of the amphitheater. As they were leaving, Jaune spotted a tall boy with silver hair looking their way.

Specifically, he was looking straight at Blake.

“I will escort the students of Atlas Academy,” Goodwitch finished off, inclining her head. “The assembly is officially concluded. Students of Beacon, you may leave.”

“Bye Jaune~!” Penny waved as she joined the other Atlas students.

Jaune waved back.

“Well, that was short and sweet,” Yang said as everyone began to disperse.

Nora nodded. “Sure was! Trust Ozpin to get us out of here quick. If it was up to Professor Goodwitch, they’d yap for an hour without pause.”

“Oh my god, I’m so excited, I wish everyone could have brought their weapons,” Ruby vibrated on the spot, and Jaune was worried she was about to burst into rose petals in a spontaneous semblance combustion. “Ahh~! This is going to be so cool! I can’t wait!”

Pyrrha giggled. “I know what you mean. I am eager to test myself against the other schools.”

At that moment, all of their scrolls decided to ping. Not just their scrolls, but everyone else, as well. All across the room, their classmates paused and pulled out their devices, and when Jaune did the same, he saw they’d received a notification from the school.

There were several things listed, but two of them stood out from the rest.

The first was for first year students, the date of their very first official mission was posted, as well as the details of such an event. According to this, they would be choosing their own mission from a pool of available requests and could range from a variety of different types. Not all of them would involve combat.

Secondly, there was the announcement of a school dance to usher in the start of the Vytal Festival, the day before the opening ceremonies in Vale would commence to welcome all the athletes that were competing.

Several pairs of eyes instantly turned on him, and Jaune felt a cold sweat run down his neck.

“Uh...”

He suddenly felt like he was in danger.