

“I want to hold a birthday party for Jaune.”

Weiss paused in what she was doing, the bag of grain she was carrying heavy in her arms. After what had happened with some of their supplies being pilfered, they were doing a stocktake to make sure everything was where it should be. Understandably, this was a very big undertaking, so any and all available, trustworthy people were drafted to help. Not only that, but security was being tightened, and some items of interest were being moved to a different location to be kept under stricter conditions.

Food was just as valuable as gold in Vacuo, but just as important were things that helped them grow things like fruit and vegetables and raise livestock. The bag of grain she was carrying was for animal consumption; cattle, goats, chickens, you name it, they could eat it.

“A birthday party?” Weiss questioned, shooting Ruby a funny look. “But it isn’t Jaune’s birthday... is it?”

Weiss thought furiously, mind running over a myriad of dates. Wait a minute... when was Jaune’s birthday? She wracked her brain but she couldn’t ever remember being told. They hadn’t celebrated it at Beacon, and then afterwards, things had been too fragmented and hectic. In Atlas, she vaguely recalled Ren, Nora and Jaune going out for a night, but she was pretty sure that had been for Nora’s birthday, not Jaune’s.

She frowned.

How long had she known him and she didn’t even know his birthday. She felt like a bad friend.

“It isn’t,” Ruby confirmed, carrying her own bag of grain. It looked a little comical since Ruby wasn’t very big, and the bags they were carrying were almost as big as they were. If Ruby looked ridiculous, Weiss must have looked quite the sight as well. “His birthday is in March. It

isn't for a while yet, but... I was thinking about it. For him, he probably hasn't celebrated his birthday in... well, a very long time."

Right.

Ruby placed her bag of grain down on the wooden pallet, arranging it neatly. Once it was stacked high enough, a few workers would come along and wrap it in plastic wrap, and then they would tow it away on a jack to be lifted onto a truck for transport. Somewhere they could keep a closer eye on it, and ensure that nothing went missing again.

"I just wanted to do something nice for him, that's all," Ruby said sheepishly, scratching her cheek. "Do you think it's dumb?"

Weiss placed her own bag of grain down and dusted her hands off, shaking her head. She shot Ruby a warm look. "No. I don't think it's dumb at all, Ruby."

Ruby beamed.

"You think so?"

Weiss nodded. "We've had very few things to celebrate recently, and I think Jaune would appreciate the thought. I like it."

Ruby bounced up and down happily, taking her hands. Weiss felt a shiver pass through her as Ruby swung their arms back and forth energetically, her good cheer infectious. Ruby had short fingers, though their hands were of similar size. Her palms were soft, and warm, and Weiss found herself flushing slightly.

“You’ll help, right?” Ruby asked brightly. “I want to make it the best thing ever!”

Weiss laughed. “Of course I’ll help. What do you have planned?”

“Well, not much... not yet,” Ruby admitted, pouting. “I was just thinking that we should have a big get together. We’ll invite all our friends, and have nice food – and cake! We definitely need a cake. The best cake we can get! Oh, oh – maybe we could make it ourselves!”

Weiss liked cake. Cake was a must. Cake for all. But especially for her – and Jaune, of course.

But...

“Do you know how to bake a cake?” Weiss asked, amused.

Ruby sagged. “No...”

“Then maybe we should buy one instead,” Weiss suggested. “Because I know nothing about baking a cake.”

“But wouldn’t it be better if we made it?” Ruby asked quietly. “It’s the thought that counts, right? It would mean more.”

She wasn't wrong. When confronted with the hope in Ruby's silver eyes, Weiss couldn't crush it. It was clear that her partner really wanted to make the attempt, no matter how disastrous it could become. And if she were being honest with herself, Weiss really wanted to try as well. It would mean a lot more, a showing of their feelings for him...

"I... guess we could try," Weiss conceded.

"Yes!" Ruby whooped loudly. "We're going to make such an awesome cake, Weiss. Jaune is going to love it!"

They could always purchase a backup if their cake turned out horrible.

"When should we hold this party?" Weiss asked.

"This weekend," Ruby said confidently. "It'll be a secret. Jaune won't know what hit him."

It was nice to think of something as mundane and fun as a birthday party, and not the impending doom they all faced, or how the gangs exploited the weak. They continued hauling bags of grain over to the arranged pallets, stacking them several high. After the grain, there were bags of powdered milk for calves and lambs that needed moving, and then bags of fertilizer. By the time their shift was over, Weiss felt an ache in her shoulders reminiscent of a hard day of training.

"I need a bath," she complained, fanning her face.

"Come on, let's go," Ruby agreed, and they made the short trek back to Shade. On the way, they bumped into Yang and Blake who were returning from their own mission, and Ruby filled them in on her idea.

They were all for it.

“Sounds like fun,” Yang grinned toothily. “Yeah, I like it.”

“What do you have planned?” Blake asked.

“Just dinner and stuff, oh, and gifts,” Ruby nodded. “Nothing big, just his friends... Team CFVY, Uncle Qrow, Weiss’ sister, if she wants to come. A small get together with food and dessert.”

“It would be nice to do something like that for a change,” Blake nodded, smiling. “It’ll lift all of our spirits.”

“Jaune’s most of all,” Yang reeled Ruby into a side-hug, torture in this heat. “Good thinking, sis.”

“Yang, get off me,” Ruby thrashed, attempting to pull away without success. “Come on, stop! It’s too hot for this!”

Yang laughed.

“Just make sure to keep it a secret,” Weiss said. “We want to surprise him.”

“Yeah, no problem,” Yang said, running a finger across her mouth. “Our lips are sealed, right, Blake?”

Blake smirked. “You could say that.”

They were doing innuendo.

Weiss rolled her eyes. “Yeah, okay – you didn’t need to put it like that.”

Blake snickered. “Like what?”

“You know what you’re doing,” Weiss pointed at her dramatically. “I don’t want to hear it.”

When they were back at Shade, Ruby said, “I’ll join you in your room so we can talk about it more, let me just get a change of clothes.”

“Ruby?” Weiss questioned but she was already gone. Shaking her head, she waved goodbye to her teammates and made her way back to her room. It was cooler here, thankfully.

Weiss sorted through her clothes, picking out something simple and light. Removing her sweaty clothes, she unbraided her hair and combed it out until it was manageable, grimacing at the grit she could feel whenever she ran her fingers through it.

Sand really was the worst.

Grabbing a fluffy towel, she slipped out of her underwear and tossed them in the hamper before making her way into the bathroom. In addition to the shower, there was a small bath to soak in, and that was what she was feeling right now. After a quick wash in the shower to remove most of the grime, she'd climb in and relax.

She was just adjusting the temperature of the water for the shower when she heard someone in her bedroom. Assuming it was Ruby, she didn't think anything of it – until the bathroom door flew open.

Weiss jumped in fright, clutching her towel to her body as her partner beamed at her in her own towel.

“Ruby, what are you doing?” Weiss demanded hotly.

Silver eyes blinked at her.

“I'm here to shower,” she said. “Can you wash my hair if I wash yours?”

Weiss' mouth opened and closed for several seconds, words failing her.

“What?” Ruby asked, confused. “We've showered together before.”

They had. A long time ago, at Beacon. After one of their classes in the Emerald Forest, when the four of them had ended up dunked in mud, there hadn't been enough time for them to

shower individually before their next class began. Beacon had the facilities, but those showers had at least been separated by a thin wall.

This was something else.

Though back then, they'd all helped each other afterwards with washing their hair. Wrapped in nothing but towels, they'd lathered shampoo into each other's scalps and rinsed it all clean. It had been a bonding moment, and helped draw them all together after the disaster of Weiss' fight with Blake.

"We can talk about Jaune's party while we wash," Ruby continued, grinning.

Weiss... wasn't as opposed as she thought she'd be, eyeing Ruby critically before sighing.

"That is... acceptable."

"Great," Ruby chirped. "Um – oh, eh – ehehe," suddenly shy, she poked her fingers together. "Um, just don't stare, okay?"

Now she wanted to get flustered? Weiss felt her cheeks grow warm.

"I won't," Weiss muttered, averting her eyes. "Hurry up. We can soak in the bath afterwards."

She tried to play it cool but Weiss felt nervous, her skin prickling as she removed her towel. She didn't dare look in Ruby's direction, instead stepping in under the spray. It was lukewarm at best,

cooling her down instantly as she ran her hands through her rapidly dampening hair, tilting her head back as the water cascaded down her body.

Weiss felt her partner step in behind her.

She focused on other things, but it was difficult. Her back was exposed to Ruby's eyes, as was her bare bottom. A flush of heat rose to her cheeks, hotter than before, and lower, her belly squirmed.

"Can I get under there?" Ruby asked quietly, and Weiss silently stepped aside so they could both stand under the spray.

"Oh," she exclaimed as she stepped forward, giggling. "It's colder than I thought."

"While I don't like it freezing, I typically don't set it too hot," Weiss said, keeping her eyes firmly shut. "If it's too low, let me know."

"No, it's fine," Ruby said. "I like it."

The next minute was spent in silence, Weiss turning around and letting the water spray down her back. Stretching her neck to the side, she gathered her hair together and pulled it around front, the white strands clumped together and running down between her small breasts. She jumped when something brushed across her hip, wet and soft, and realized it was Ruby's body as she turned.

"Sorry," Ruby apologized automatically.

“It’s okay,” Weiss replied, feeling her heart begin to race. “You didn’t mean it.”

It was always harder not to look when you constantly thought about a thing, and Weiss felt her curiosity tug at her relentlessly. Jaw tightening, she reached for the cloth and body wash, dispensing a healthy dollop onto it and running up across her belly. Her skin felt strangely sensitive, her nipples instantly tightening at the sensation.

*What was wrong with her?*

Was she really so mindful of her body because of Ruby? They were friends. Best friends. Partners. Teammates. Ruby was the younger sister she didn’t have, and someone who understood her in ways no one else did.

Only she understood how she felt for Jaune, and vice versa.

She shouldn’t be nervous. She should be confident. Self assured.

Weiss had nothing to hide from her.

Sighing, she scrubbed along her arms and breasts, trying not to stimulate her hardened nipples too much. Lathering more body wash onto the cloth, she worked on her shoulders, and then around her waist, her hips, and then her legs. The air was filled with the scent of vanilla and coconut, a calming smell, and as she scrubbed her inner thighs, and then her crotch, she inadvertently glanced to the left, out of the corner of her eye.

She didn't mean to do it, but she couldn't help it.

Weiss swallowed as pale, soft skin met her eyes, stretched across lithe, taut muscle. Ruby's back was a work of art, lean and clearly defined, shoulders broader than you might have realized. Her upper back was wide, flaring out powerfully before narrowing sharply at the waist, built from hours upon hours of swinging Crescent Rose. Her hips then swelled rapidly, heavysset, and her butt was—Weiss quickly looked forward, a little dazed.

*What was she doing?*

She shouldn't have looked. That was wrong of her.

Weiss pressed the cloth to her neck, attempting to calm down.

"Can I have the cloth?" Ruby asked.

"Oh, uh – yeah, sure," Weiss handed it over blindly, and her knuckles touched skin. Weiss froze as Ruby inhaled sharply, a breathless giggle escaping her.

"Sorry," Weiss said immediately as Ruby took the cloth.

"It's okay," Ruby answered, her voice sounding odd. Husky, almost.

Weiss rinsed off, using her hands to help remove the soap suds. Turning again, she kept her gaze locked on the wall. She heard Ruby lathering the body wash across her body.

“Can you scrub my back?” Ruby suddenly asked.

“What?”

Weiss felt like she misheard her.

“Can you scrub my back?” Ruby repeated.

Couldn't she do it herself?

“I'll do your back as well,” Ruby offered.

Weiss pursed her lips. It was an innocent request.

“Okay,” she agreed.

Ruby handed her the cloth and presented her back. Weiss hesitated before turning to face her, eyes landing on the nape of her neck. Bringing the cloth up, she pressed the material to Ruby's shoulder blades and began scrubbing up and down, trying not to think about how firm her muscles were, even through the cloth.

She failed.

The cloth dipped and followed the lines of each individual muscle, ensuring that Weiss felt the outline of each keenly. Moving side to side, her eyes lost their battle and dipped down. Pale, creamy skin – though she could see clearly where the sun had touched upon her body, darkening her skin slightly from what was usually hidden away. Weiss' hands moved lower, scrubbing Ruby's lower back, just shy of the prominent curve of her shapely behind.

Ruby squirmed. "That feels good."

Why did she have to put it like that?

Weiss directed the cloth around her hip, skirting the top of her ass dangerously.

"There," she said, mouth feeling dry.

"Thanks," Ruby chirped. "Here, let me do you now."

Weiss handed her the cloth and quickly turned away as Ruby spun around, in danger of showing her a little too much. She caught a flash of pink from the corner of her eyes, and her mind supplied the rest.

Ruby's nipples.

Weiss closed her eyes, forcing the thought away. She heard Ruby apply more body wash and then felt the cloth press against her spine. She worked it up and down at first, scrubbing lightly, before moving in circles, focusing on her upper back.

“You have such pretty skin.”

“I...” Weiss searched for the words. What do you even say to that? “Thanks.”

“And you’re so slim,” she continued, scrubbing harder. “Your muscles are really hard, though.”

“...Don’t call my muscles hard.”

Ruby laughed, and Weiss detected a hint of nerves.

“Sorry, sorry – it’s just surprising, that’s all. Since you’re so... delicate looking.”

“Don’t call me delicate,” Weiss muttered.

The cloth moved lower, and Weiss had to fight the urge to squirm. Her lower back had always been strangely sensitive. Almost ticklish, in a way. Where other people jumped and recoiled at having their pits tickled, for Weiss, it was her back. Whenever she would attend functions and someone would guide her through a crowd with a hand, it always made her feel uncomfortable.

This didn’t feel uncomfortable, but it definitely felt *something*.

“Your waist is so tiny,” Ruby mumbled.

“Your waist isn’t exactly big, either,” Weiss countered. “Stop talking about my body!”

“Sorry.”

When she was done with her back, they moved onto their hair.

Ruby went first. She had much shorter hair than Weiss did, though it had grown out a little. She liked the new way Ruby styled her hair, the fringe longer than before, framing her face. The asymmetrical look suited her a lot, and it had grown out a little in the back, messier but pretty.

Weiss grabbed the bottle of shampoo and squeezed some into her hand. It had a rich, fruity scent – mango, and something more acidic; not lemon or lime, but more orange. It was much easier to focus on the back of Ruby’s head without seeing anything she shouldn’t, threading her fingers through her soft hair and lathering it up.

“Mmm, that feels so good,” Ruby groaned, shoulders sagging as she tilted her head back gleefully. “Nothing beats having someone else wash your hair.”

Weiss understood the feeling. Her favorite part of going to salons in her youth had been the full wash she would receive. Having another person massage your scalp with their fingers and nails was very soothing. Yang had been the one to wash her muddy hair at Beacon that one time, and she’d been very thorough but gentle.

“Just stay still,” Weiss said, finding herself smiling. Though her heart continued to beat a little too fast, she felt herself relaxing as she ran her fingers from front to back, lightly kneading Ruby’s scalp. The shampoo lathered into a thick foam, and Weiss made sure to get behind the ears, and around the edges, as well as the front.

She then reached for the shower head and pulled it off the wall. "Tilt your head back further."

Ruby did as she was told, and Weiss carefully rinsed her hair clean, one hand directing the spray while the other carded through her hair, using her fingers to open it up. Weiss always liked the pretty gradient of Ruby's hair, going from black to red. It was very fetching.

Once the shampoo was rinsed out, Weiss reached for the conditioner. She repeated the process, massaging the conditioner in, her fingers a little more firm, and then she rinsed it all out.

"There," Weiss said, satisfied.

"Your turn," Ruby said happily.

Weiss had *a lot* of hair.

Maybe Ruby sensed some trepidation, because she said, "I used to wash Yang's hair all the time, when we were younger and I got old enough to know what to do. Don't worry, you're in good hands."

Weiss tilted her head back and felt Ruby rub her fingers through her long, white strands. The very ends tickled the backs of her calves. Soon enough, her hair would be long enough to touch the ground when it was let free.

Ruby lathered it in parts. She started at the end, and worked her way up, reapplying shampoo as she went. She was very gentle, and just as Yang had been all those years ago, very thorough. When she made it to the top, she rubbed her scalp pleasantly, Weiss sighing as her fingers lulled her overactive mind.

Ruby was right. It did feel good.

Once the shampoo was spread through all of her hair, Ruby began to rinse it out, starting at the top this time and working her way down. Ruby began humming a small tune as she carefully removed all the shampoo and then started lathering in the conditioner. It was so calming that Weiss forgot that they were both naked in the shower together, even humming along.

This was nice.

“You have a much bigger butt than I thought,” Ruby broke the serenity of the moment with her careless words, Weiss’ eyes snapping open.

“Ruby!” Weiss snapped, appalled. “I didn’t ask for your opinion!”

“I’m just saying...”

Weiss scowled. “Don’t!”

Silence descended upon them, only the spray of the shower filling the air. Weiss glared at the ceiling as Ruby continued to apply the conditioner, annoyed.

“...My butt isn't big.”

“I didn't mean it in a bad way!” Ruby insisted. “It's just... you know, the shape is a lot more dramatic than I was expecting. You always wear skirts, so I've never had a good look before.”

This girl...

“Please shut up.”

After Ruby rinsed out the conditioner, they stepped out of the shower. Weiss approached the bath, turning it on and testing the water until it was just right. As it filled, she patted her hair with her towel before wrapping it up.

“So...” Ruby drew out slowly. “Do you think we'll both fit.”

The bath was pretty small, but it was deep – and they weren't exactly big themselves. There were some generic scents on the sideboard, so Weiss selected one and squirted it in, and watched as the water began to bubble up.

“We should be fine,” Weiss said.

The bubbles would give them a little bit of privacy from one another.

Once the water level was right, Weiss turned off the tap and slipped in. She kept her eyes averted as Ruby slipped in the other end, their legs brushing together. Weiss tensed as Ruby's foot came dangerously close to touching her somewhere inappropriate but then she settled.

"Where should we hold the party?" Ruby asked. Weiss turned to face her, and saw she'd also wrapped her towel up around her head.

The question helped take Weiss' mind off this strange situation she found herself in.

"Here at Shade would be best, I think," Weiss thought about it a little. "I'm sure the Headmaster would be willing to allow us a room, and it would be free. We could use the kitchen facilities here for food – and to bake Jaune's cake."

Ruby nodded along. "Yeah, that's probably the smartest play. Most of us are all here, as well, so there doesn't have to be any traveling. Who should we invite?"

"Well, Yang and Blake are coming. Ren and Nora, obviously," Weiss began counting on her fingers. "Team CFVY. Team SSSN. Emerald. Winter will come, I'm sure," she then hesitated. "And... I think my mother and brother would attend if asked."

Ruby blinked. "Really?"

"Mother has been baking him cookies," Weiss said, shaking her head. "I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it for myself. As for Whitley... I don't know why or how it happened, but I think he respects Jaune."

Ruby's eyes lit up. "That's so cute!"

“Cute isn’t the word I’d use,” Weiss grumbled.

“You don’t like it that your brother thinks highly of him?”

“It isn’t that,” Weiss denied. “It’s just... I don’t know. I just wasn’t expecting it, that’s all,” she sighed. “But yes, they’ll attend if invited. Oh, and Oscar.”

Ruby laughed awkwardly.

“Yeah,” she said softly.

Weiss shot her a look. “You need to talk to him.”

She nodded. “I know. I will.”

“Do you think...” Weiss began, then paused.

“What?”

“Dr. Polendina,” she voiced, and saw Ruby’s brow furrow. “Do you think that would be okay? Or would it be... too much?”

Ruby shook her head. “No, I think that’s perfect. I think Jaune would agree.”

“Maria, as well,” Weiss added.

Ruby ducked her head, biting her lip. “What about... Cerise?”

Weiss grunted.

A part of her wanted to say no, of course not – but that part of her was silly, and mean, and envious. Envious of what? Weiss didn’t know. She had nothing to be envious of, and yet she still felt the way she did. It was ridiculous.

Yes, she was a beautiful woman – but Weiss had known beautiful women her entire life. Ruby, Yang and Blake – her own teammates – were ridiculously attractive. Why did some random civilian bother her so much when watching Jaune interact with other pretty girls didn’t?

When Ruby herself admitted that she loved Jaune?

She exhaled heavily through her nose. “Yes, we should invite her – and her daughters.”

Ruby looked up. “You think so?”

Weiss nodded. "Yes. Come to think of it, we can invite the other families as well. I'm sure they would enjoy a little bit of levity, don't you think? After everything they've gone through."

Ruby smiled. "Yeah, I like that idea a lot."

Once they had the guest list sorted, they moved onto other things.

"We have to have music," Ruby said before she frowned. "I don't really know what type of music he likes, though."

"I don't either," Weiss echoed, troubled. "I guess we'll just have to ask."

"We'll have to be sneaky about it."

"Decorations are a must," Weiss said.

"Balloons, streamers... no doilies," Ruby teased.

Weiss scoffed and splashed her, Ruby spluttering as some of the bubbles got in her mouth. "There is nothing wrong with doilies! They are very sophisticated and help add a layer of elegance, no matter how small!"

Ruby giggled. "You're so cute."

Weiss splashed her again.

Then there was the subject of presents. This was a birthday party, after all – even though it wasn't technically his birthday. The cake would be one, but that was a shared present between the both of them. The party itself was also a present, of a sort. But again, it was a shared one.

Weiss wanted to get him something from her, and her alone.

“Hmm – I think I have an idea on what I want to get him,” Ruby said. “What about you?”

Weiss didn't have to think long.

“Yeah,” she said softly. “I know what I want to get him.”

They kept chatting until the water cooled, and their fingers began pruning.