

He met Yang early the next morning and she had news for him.

“I managed to get a meeting with the Black Lotus,” she told him as soon as she stepped off the ferry. “We’re meeting with some guy called Hongwei at one of their clubs but the meeting isn’t until tonight. Some place called the Violet Room.”

“So we’ve got a whole day to kill?”

She smirked, hand on hip. “Guess you’ll just have to put up with me until then. How about it? It’s a good day for a date, don’t you think?”

She’d certainly dressed nicely. A small pair of denim shorts cupped her pert rear, leaving her pale, slender legs exposed. That wasn’t anything new. The overly large white sneakers were different, though. As was the thin chain looped around her waist, resting against her bare belly below the hem of her orange top, drawing the eye with small golden stars dangling from its length. A matching denim jacket finished the simple but eye catching ensemble of clothes, her golden mane lush and fuller than usual.

She gave a little spin, showing off her body. “You like?”

“You look great,” he told her honestly. “You always do.”

Her smirk became more of a genuine smile, lilac eyes crinkling. “Look at you, buttering me up.”

He shrugged. “Just telling the truth, Yang.”

She still wore her weapons, though they just appeared as stylish bracelets when they were in their collapsed form and not a pair of mecha-shifting gauntlets.

While she'd dressed for a bit of fun, Jaune had dressed for combat. She eyed him up and down critically, posing dramatically, framing her hands as if looking through a camera.

"Well, you look mighty fine all the time yourself – but that isn't date attire. Let's go get you into something more appropriate."

"What's wrong with what I have on?"

"Nothing. Like I said, you always look good but you wear it all the time, so it isn't as charming," Yang looped an arm through his, pulling him along. "I'm not an Ursa, so you can lose the armor. I'm sure you've got something fashionable but casual, let me dress you up."

And so their first stop was his hotel. Yang drew her fair share of looks. Not only because she was another human in their midst but because she was a smoking hot bombshell of a young woman, and a lot of the early morning workers were giving her not so subtle glances. She ate it up, strutting beside him, and her confidence was infectious.

"I've never been to this part of town before," she admitted. "I guess it always seemed a little intimidating with all the faunus, when I was younger. I used to hear stories about some of the kids getting run out of here. I dunno how true it all was, but even the trouble makers steered clear."

"Yang Xiao Long, scared?" he needled her and she nudged him in the ribs.

“Hey, I wasn’t *always* this badass, you know? Anyway, don’t you work around here?”

“Yeah, down by the south side entrance. It’s mostly used by traders and farmers. It’s where I came through when I arrived.”

“I gotta say, I kinda like it here. It has an old charm to it,” she said, looking around at all the older style buildings. “Sorta like those old gangster movies my dad used to always watch.”

The receptionist watched them closely as he led Yang up the stairs, and he had a feeling she had the wrong idea about what was going on.

“Right, where’s your stuff,” Yang said as soon as she entered his room. She quickly found his luggage and began rifling through his clothes.

“What if I had something in there that I didn’t want you to see?” he asked dryly.

“Do you?” she shot back, not even looking up. “If I tip this bag up, will a sex toy fall out?”

Jaune snorted. “No, but my underwear might.”

She shrugged carelessly. “Guys don’t care about that sort of shit, do they? Unless you wear girly panties.”

“Sorry to disappoint, but no.”

“Bummer.”

Hurricane Yang had arrived.

She dug through everything he had which admittedly wasn't that much, putting together an outfit she deemed appropriate.

“Here, go put these on,” she shoved it all into his arms. “Do you have any jackets?”

“Closet,” he nodded, and she skipped over, throwing it open.

“Aha~!” she cheered, pulling out the suit jacket he'd worn on the date with Blake. “Here, this as well.”

It was a mesh of casual and formal. A darker pair of jeans and a plain white shirt, as well as the dark fitted jacket. With his boots, you wouldn't expect it to work but as Jaune looked at himself in the mirror, it did. But she wasn't done.

“Here, let me do your hair,” she directed him over to the bed and sat him down, comb and spray in hand. “I'll turn you into a masterpiece.”

Jaune had plenty of memories of his sisters doing things like this with him, but those occasions hadn't been quite as enjoyable as this. They'd been dressing him up in dresses and pulling his

hair into ridiculous hair styles, doing their best to turn him into an eighth sister. This was much more pleasant.

Whenever Yang leaned in, he did his best not to stare at her chest which stretched against the material of her top. A soft scent tickled his nose, something creamy, tinged with vanilla and spice. Her nails raked against his scalp which felt really good, his eyes fluttering shut as she continued to style his hair.

“There,” she finally said, stepping back. Jaune opened his eyes and saw her beaming. “Go have a look.”

His hair was even messier than usual but it was a controlled chaos. As chaotic as it appeared, every strand seemed like it was there for a reason, pulled back away from his forehead, opening up his face.

“Good, right?” Yang asked. “I know my stuff.”

Jaune nodded. “Yeah.”

Crocea Mors took its place on his hip, and then they were out the door.

“So – since this ‘date’ was your idea, what are we doing?”

“Hey, aren’t you a traditionalist? Shouldn’t the guy take the lead?” she teased, eyebrow arched.

Jaune shrugged. "Like I said. it was your idea."

Yang snickered, threading her arm through his again. "Fine, fine. Well, how about you show me around here first? Then we can go get something to eat. I'm famished."

Jaune had an idea. "Want to see where I work?"

She perked up.

He probably shouldn't have suggested it. As soon as Red and the others saw him with a different girl, he could hear the teasing coming before they even opened their mouths.

"Another one, huh?" Red asked, peering at Yang with curiosity. "You know, Jaune – we were just joking before but now I'm beginning to become concerned."

"Oh?" Yang asked, intrigued. "What's this guy been up to?"

"He's always showing up with a new dame on his arm," Auburn chimed in from the sidelines. "You need to be careful."

Jaune sighed. "It's nothing like that. Nora stopped by once, and Blake. They're just messing with us."

"So you think this guy is a womanizer," Yang nodded. "You aren't far off the mark."

“Yang,” Jaune groaned as the guys laughed. “Don’t give them any ideas.”

“It looks like you’ve been giving them enough yourself,” Yang grinned. “So you’ve been bringing other girls around. I don’t know how I feel about that, it feels like you’re just bringing us here to show us off.”

“It isn’t like that – *at all*.”

Yang laughed under her breath. “I suppose we are all worth showing off, so I can’t blame ya.”

They spent some time just chatting with the guys. It was a bit of a slow day, so they had some spare time to hang out. Yang got along with them really well, and wasn’t afraid of or shied away from their rough nature, matching them with dry wit of her own.

Jaune showed her around the warehouse and talked about what he did, which wasn’t much. He was just a donkey, in truth, but he pointed out the customs agents and their jobs, and how occasionally they managed to catch some contraband attempting to come into the city.

“Like that White Fang stuff.”

Jaune nodded. “Yeah. We haven’t had anything else like that come through. Well – nothing we’ve caught, but they’ve been pretty vigilant since then. The guys here... they’re mostly faunus but they were pretty steamed about it. They aren’t fans of the Fang.”

After that, they went for a walk outside the kingdom walls. It had been awhile since Jaune had been out here. Not since he arrived, but nothing had changed. There were still stalls and security loitering around, keeping the peace. Though the air was chilly, the sun was out today, the sky clear of cloud. It was very picturesque, the green rolling hills, the forests in the distance, the snow capped mountains to the east.

“So you came through here, huh?” she asked, admiring the murals carved into the large stone arch.

“Yeah. Coming from the north, you have to swing around the mountain range and come in from the south – or risk the mountain paths. No one goes that way, from what I understand. There are some trains that go under the mountains and come out in Forever Fall to the north, but none of those start up north, they come from the eastern coast.”

“Must have been quite the journey.”

Jaune smiled. “Yeah. I hitch-hiked in the back of a wagon. Offered my services to protect it against bandits and Grimm, so not a bad deal. Nothing tried its luck with us, so it was pretty uneventful.”

“I’ve always wanted to do a bit of traveling,” Yang revealed. “Just be out in the world, you know? Go where you want, when you want, do whatever you want. It’s part of why I want to be a Huntress.”

“Oh?”

“Helping people – I mean, that’s good. It isn’t like I don’t want to do that,” she looked up at the clear sky as they walked. “Of course I do. But I’m not driven to be a hero or anything like that, not like Ruby. I just want a bit of freedom, I guess. The thrill of survival, just me and my fists,

against the world. Seeking adventure. Make money as I go, not knowing where I'll turn up. Make sense?"

Jaune nodded. "Yeah."

"What do you think about that?"

"What do you mean?"

She shrugged. "I dunno. Does it sound shallow or something? Ruby has always been so gungho about helping others and stuff, it always made me feel a little... selfish? No, that isn't the right word, but... I guess a little adrift. As if I'm being childish."

"I don't think you're being childish, Yang," he told her. "Everyone has different desires. I can certainly see the appeal. Honestly, I'd love that type of life. A lot of my childhood was just like that, going off into the wilderness, though my home was always right there waiting for me."

"But you're like Ruby, aren't you?" she asked knowingly.

"I guess I am," he agreed. "I hate the Grimm, and I don't want to see another family go through what mine did – and worse, what other families have had to endure when they lose a loved one. I know I can't stop all of it, I'm just one guy. But if I stop it from happening once?" he met her eyes. "Then it is all worth it."

Yang nudged him playfully. "See what I mean? When you guys say stuff like that, it makes me feel a little lost."

“I don’t think you’re much different, Yang.”

She blinked. “How so?”

“Maybe you just want to move around and be free, and do what you want, when you want. But if you had the choice to save someone or not save someone, what are you going to choose?”

“I’d save them,” she said without hesitation.

“Then are you really that different?” he asked. “Our motivations might be, sure – but the end result? You’d place yourself in danger, be their shield, at a moment’s notice. I think that is admirable. You care about people, Yang. You aren’t cold hearted. You’re one of the warmest people I know.”

They walked for some time in silence after that, and Jaune knew she was thinking it over. He’d been a little surprised by her words. Yang had never struck him as the type to doubt herself, or be worried about her motivations and desires. She’d always struck him as a city girl, as well, so it was also a surprise to know she wanted to go out into the untamed wilds to live her life, a day at a time.

Though Patch wasn’t exactly the city, was it? Even though it was nearby. From everything he knew about the island, it was pretty underdeveloped. It had farms and a small town, it was just their proximity to Vale that influenced his opinions. Yang might have spent a lot of her childhood walking the streets of the city, but perhaps at heart, she was a bit of a country girl herself.

Eventually, she sighed. “I never really thought about it in those terms.”

“Everyone is different,” Jaune said. “The world would be pretty boring if we were all the same. Being a Huntress for any reason is about as far from selfish as I can think of. Even if you were just doing it for the money and prestige. At the end of the day, you’ll be called upon to defend the kingdom, or a small village, and I’d like to think that almost any Huntsman would answer that call.”

“Even Cardin?”

Jaune snorted. “Even Cardin – I think.”

Yang laughed.

“I guess I was always a little intimidated by Ruby,” Jaune looked at her in surprise, and she smiled softly in response. “Even though she is my younger sister, and I’ve watched her grow up and helped mother her, she has always been so sure about her path forward. Zero hesitation, zero doubt – she wants to be a Huntress, to save people, to help those that need it. She reminds me of mom,” Yang looked down, eyes focused on her shoes as they scuffed through the dirt. “Summer, I mean. She was the same. They’re so alike, sometimes when I look at Ruby, all I can see is mom. It makes me so happy, and proud – but also scared.”

“Scared?”

“Mom died being a Huntress,” Yang said quietly. “She died helping people, I’m sure. That’s what I believe. I’m worried that Ruby might walk down that same path, one day.”

Jaune placed a hand on her shoulder, halting them. She looked up at him questioningly.

“It’s a dangerous job,” he told her. “I don’t need to tell you that. But you’re also walking down this path, no matter the motivations. And Yang Xiao Long would never back down from a fight, or tuck tail and run. Aren’t you also your mother’s daughter?”

Jaune saw something in her eyes shift, her posture straightening. He hadn’t noticed it until now but she’d been a bit slouched, almost like the conversation had been weighing her down a bit.

“I guess I am.”

“Ruby has you,” Jaune told her. “As a sister, as a partner and teammate. And she has Pyrrha, and Ren – Me, Weiss, Blake, Nora. She has all of us, and we have her. We’ve got each other’s backs. Life is unpredictable, and we don’t know what is coming for us in the end, but we can do our best to stand by one another.”

There was a beat of silence, and then she smiled, eyes soft.

“Thanks. I – I didn’t mean to get all sappy,” she shook her head, annoyed. “We’re meant to be enjoying ourselves, not getting all heavy and emotional. *Fuck*. Sorry about this. It’s probably all this bullshit with Raven, I’ve been thinking about this crap.”

“Why are you apologizing? We’re just having a conversation,” Jaune released her shoulder after a soft squeeze. “I’m happy you shared that with me. That’s how we get to know each other better, right?”

“So you want to know me better?” she asked, a teasing lilt in her voice, some of her usual boisterousness showing through.

“Yeah. Don’t you want to know me better?”

“I don’t know. It feels dangerous – but you said I would never back down from a fight,” she said playfully, much lighter than before. “Come on, let’s have fun and leave this shit behind.”

They made their way back into the city.

“What do you want to do?”

“How about we go watch a movie?” she suggested. “It’ll waste a boatload of time, and it’s like the classic date activity, right?”

“Sure, I’m down.”

There was a cinema nearby but Yang decided that they needed to go to the biggest one in the city. Apparently they had the second biggest screens in the world, second only to some place in Atlas, and they had some type of VIP area for those that paid a little extra. It sounded fun, so they caught a taxi across town.

As soon as they stepped into the foyer, Jaune’s nose was assaulted by salted buttery popcorn and sweet confectionery. It was busy, packed with children and teenagers. It was very clearly a popular hangout spot, and as Yang made her way over to the self service kiosk, the male gaze followed.

“What kinda movies do you like?” Yang asked as she swiped on the screen, bringing up a list of different screenings.

Jaune shrugged. “Anything is fine.”

“Come on,” Yang groaned, rolling her eyes. “You have to have a preference.”

He thought about it a little.

“I guess something with a bit of mystery is usually fun,” he moved in closer, peering over her shoulder. “Though I can’t say no to a dumb action flick.”

“Something dumb, gotcha,” she continued swiping. “Oh look, Spruce Willis has something new – oh, there’s a new Hungover movie. Those are hilarious. Have you seen the other two?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Damn. When we’re back at Beacon, we need to watch them. You’re missing out.”

Someone placed a hand on top of the kiosk, drawing their attention.

“Hey beautiful, what’s your name?”

He was their age, reasonably good looking with short, gray hair and undoubtedly a civilian. He shot what passed for a suave look at Yang, squaring his shoulders to make himself look bigger, like some sort of animal mating ritual to catch her interest.

It didn't work.

"What?" Yang deadpanned.

"Your name," he repeated, flashing a set of white teeth. "I'd like to know it."

"None of your business," she said blandly before returning her focus to the screen.

Jaune saw a couple of other guys loitering nearby, watching. Friends, no doubt – accompanied by a group of girls. They were shooting daggers at Yang with their eyes, disgruntled that she was receiving the attention. They were all pretty, in their own ways – but they didn't hold a candle to Yang.

"Don't be like that, babe. My name is Sterling," he introduced himself.

"Didn't ask."

"I thought that maybe you'd like to spend some time together, get to know one another."

Yang turned her head, shooting Jaune a look.

“As you can see, I’m with someone,” she finally said, shaking her head. “And I’m getting to know him better, so buzz off.”

Sterling eyed him up, as if he hadn’t seen Jaune standing right there all this time. He was a pretty big guy, he’d give him that. They stood about equal in height, though Jaune was built solidly while he was more lanky.

“So? How about you ditch this loser and come with us, you’d have a way better time.”

Yang snorted.

“Jaune, are you going to say something or just keep letting him embarrass himself?”

“I don’t know. I was kind of enjoying myself. I wanted to see what you’d do.”

“Don’t you think it’d be better if you handled it? You know how I can be.”

Jaune chuckled. She wasn’t wrong.

Sterling frowned, annoyed that he was being ignored. But before he could say anything else, Jaune stepped away from Yang and faced him fully. His eyes immediately darted down and saw the sword hanging on his hip, and Jaune watched as he visibly flinched and backed off with hands raised.

“Woah, h-hey, I don’t want any trouble.”

Jaune smiled. “Me either.”

He beat a hasty retreat, returning to his friends. Some of the girls were giving Jaune curious looks but he ignored them, focusing on Yang.

“Well, that was a bit too easy,” Yang complained. “I was hoping he’d try throw down with you.”

“He’s cocky, not stupid,” Jaune said.

While having a weapon didn’t immediately classify you as a Huntsman, carrying so openly certainly pointed in that direction. And there weren’t many civilians stupid enough to take on a Huntsman, trainee or not.

“See what I have to put up with?”

“Have you tried being less attractive?”

She scoffed.

“Are you saying I asked for it? You know that isn’t exactly PC these days, dude.”

“I wasn’t saying that. I’m just saying, have you tried not being gorgeous? It might help, that’s all.”

At the start of the year, Jaune could never imagine exchanging banter like this. It just showed how at ease he was with her now, no longer intimidated by her beauty – or the beauty of any of his female friends.

Yang snickered. “Sorry. I was born this way.”

In the end, Yang picked a movie that was part mystery, part horror and thriller, though it had its fair share of action. It was about a man – a Huntsman – who ended up surrounded by Grimm and blacking out, only to miraculously survive the encounter. No one could explain why, but as the days turned to weeks, he began noticing that something was wrong with him. Women he had known for years were suddenly coming onto him, and he found himself getting involved with many of them, a web of lust and debauchery developing. The movie ended with the big reveal; that the man had been infected by some human-Grimm hybrid, compelled to breed with as many fertile women as possible for some nefarious purpose that had yet to be revealed.

So it was going to have a sequel.

Jaune liked it, though it got very hot and heavy at times, and he was hyper aware of Yang sitting next to him during those moments.

They both loaded up on popcorn and candy since they never did end up getting any breakfast, but were both still starving when they stepped back out onto the street.

“That was great,” Yang said, stretching her arms above her head. “He totally got all those women pregnant.”

“You think so?”

“None of them were thinking straight,” Yang nodded. “And why else would that Grimm lady infect him and make him do all those things? It’s a little creepy, actually. Will they have Grimm babies?”

That was a horrifying thought.

“Do you think there are any Grimm like that?” he asked. “You know – capable of thinking, and planning, and doing something like that?”

Yang pulled a face. “Well – maybe not like *that*. But there are Grimm that look disturbingly humanoid. I hate those ones the most. But a Grimm that can talk? And look smoking hot? Probably not. I hope not. That would be the ultimate weapon against Huntsmen.”

“How so?”

“I mean, she’s a sexy, naked woman and Huntsmen are men,” she smirked. “She also has those powers – can you imagine? You wouldn’t stand a chance.”

“I wouldn’t?”

“You *are* a guy,” Yang looked him up and down. “Yep. Definitely a guy.”

“I wouldn’t fall for a Grimm woman.”

“I dunno... I think you’d flirt with it, for sure.”

“Where are you getting this from?” he frowned.

“Oh, you know – you’re a pretty charming guy, Jaune. You’d offer it your jacket, and then all sorts of dirty stuff would happen, not suitable for tv.”

Jaune snorted. “You’re an idiot.”

“Maybe we should just wheel you out if a Grimm like this shows up. You might be our best chance.”

He rolled his eyes.

“So – you hungry? Because those snacks didn’t do much for me,” Yang patted her stomach.

Jaune nodded. “Yeah, sure. How about pizza?”

So that's where he took her. Yang realized what was happening before they arrived but she remained silent, right up until they arrived. The familiar little pizza spot that Ruby had shown him to was just as he remembered it, with a line of people waiting to be served.

"Ruby?" she asked quietly.

"She brought me here once," Jaune revealed. "I'd never had pizza before, so she rectified that."

"...And I'm sure she mentioned our history with this place?"

"It may have come up."

Yang smiled softly, lilac eyes seeing something he couldn't.

"I've been avoiding this place."

"I know."

"But you still brought me here."

"Yeah."

There was a beat of silence.

“Shouldn’t I have?”

“No, this is... I don’t mind coming here with you.”

“The pizza here was really good,” Jaune said.

Yang nodded, moving closer – and to his surprise, she rested her head on his shoulder. Her golden tresses spilled down his chest, fragrant and soft.

“Yeah. It’s the best.”

When it was their turn to order, they just got one pizza to share. Yang ordered some sort of chilli chicken concoction that ended up being delicious, covered in different types of cheese, mushrooms, peppers and bacon. It was much hotter than anything Jaune had ever had before, spicy food wasn’t exactly an Arc family staple. He had to go order a soda to counteract the heat, and it wasn’t exactly that helpful.

“Hot enough for you?” she asked with a shit eating grin.

Jaune chugged half of his cola, tongue on fire. “You did this on purpose,” he accused.

Yang didn’t deny it. “That’s for bringing me here and making me feel all emotional and shit. That’s twice today.”

“You did it the first time, not me.”

“Yeah, well – I still blame you.”

When they finished their pizza, they went shopping. Yang didn't buy anything but she ended up trying on a lot of different outfits, moving from store to store with a skip in her step. It didn't matter what she wore, it looked amazing on her. She was a shorts and pants kinda girl, and yet when she stepped out of the changing room in a summer dress, Jaune was momentarily struck speechless.

“Oh, look at that expression,” Yang teased, giving a little twirl. The dress was a soft yellow in color, the material light, floating around her knees as she spun. It completely changed her vibe. “So you like this kind of thing, huh?”

Yeah, he did. He liked it a lot.

“You look great.”

After that, she tried on a lot more dresses.

As the afternoon became evening, it was getting closer to their arranged time to meet with the Black Lotus information broker. They started making their way across the city towards the Violet Room, choosing to walk.

Now that the sun was gone, the already chilly air became frigid.

“You ready for this?” he asked.

“You know it.”

They were only a couple of blocks away when they unexpectedly ran into someone they knew by chance.

“Friend Jaune!” Penny waved happily from across the street. “Friend Yang! What a coincidence!” she hiccuped as she waited for the pedestrian signal.

What were the chances?