

Growing up in the Rose-Xiao Long Household, Ruby always paid attention to the strength and skill displayed by her father and sister. The two blondes shared plenty in common beyond their looks; when it came to their fighting style and skills, it was obvious that Yang inherited her direct beat'em'up approach from their father. She'd grown up watching her sister bring down trees with her bare hands, and curl bars equipped with plates so thick and heavy they looked like only a forklift could lift them. It was always an awe-inspiring sight that encouraged Ruby to try harder, to always get a little stronger and a little faster whenever Yang reached a new milestone.

She's sparred a lot with Yang, trusting in her older sister's experience and martial arts to guide her into becoming the huntress she always wanted to be. Her instructions were direct and painful, truly; sometimes she thought Yang didn't need her gauntlets. Those knuckles were powerful enough on their own. Ruby had started her journey to become a Huntress by learning from Yang, always trying to catch up to her. And always feeling downtrodden when she felt she wasn't good enough.

Now, Ruby wasn't so insecure about her abilities. She was very fast thanks to her Semblance, and pretty strong on her own right (Crescent Rose was over fifty pounds heavy, after all), but sometimes felt she had reached a limit in her physical abilities. Or at least, that her progress slowed down in certain areas.

Case in point, her hand-to-hand combat.

Ruby let out a sharp breath as she dodged under a swift hook delivered by her sister. Her breathing was already labored, even as Yang remained pumped and full of energy. Her eager grin was a sight that had become familiar over the many times they've sparred together. "Come on, sis! You can't be on the defensive forever!"

Ruby grunted and did as she was told. A pulse of her Aura and her Semblance activated, moving in a blur of red and black. She tried to maneuver around Yang, taking advantage of her sister's slower speed and reaction time. She appeared right behind her and raised her leg, poised to strike.

Only for Yang's arm to lash out and grab her ankle before it could connect.

Just because Yang's speed was slower than Ruby's didn't mean they were nonexistent. And indeed, she made up for it with some pretty honed instincts.

Ruby shook her head.

Yang grinned and nodded.

Ruby's arms flailed as she sailed through the air, letting out a loud yelp before colliding with the matted floor, bouncing up a few times before plumping in defeat. "Why..."

"You really think I wouldn't see that coming?" Yang said, keeping a friendly smile as she placed her hands on her hips. "You've tried that trick on me before."

"Thought third time would be the charm..."

"More like seventh, but eh, who's counting."

Yang extended her hand, and Ruby grasped it. She was raised to the floor so fast and so easily, as though she was feather-weight to someone like her sister.

Ruby had sparred with Yang many times over the years. When they first started, Yang had been going easy on her. But being a Huntress was an incredibly dangerous profession; the kiddie gloves came off eventually so they would both be better prepared to face the soulless monsters who wanted nothing more than to kill them. Ruby did not want Yang to take it easy on her anymore. But in every one of those bouts, Ruby had yet to win a single confrontation.

It... stung her pride. She always held Yang as a great standard regarding what a fighter should be like. Strong and firm, immovable, able to make the world move instead. Her sister had been adamant she had to keep up on her hand-to-hand, that she wouldn't always have Crescent Rose when she needed it. Ruby wanted to say she had been learning a lot, but not enough to defeat someone like Yang, whose specialty was that sort of close-quarter combat.

Ruby huffed in disappointment as she compared herself to her sister. A bit taller, decently muscular, Yang was certainly the fittest member of Team RWBY. Her gym hours were long and very thorough. Ruby knew for a fact she wasn't able to keep up for even a quarter of it.

Though it did make her feel a bit better that Weiss and Blake lasted even less than she did.

But it didn't change the fact that Ruby wasn't growing stronger. She had been accepted in Beacon a few years in advance because of her skill; if she slowed down now, then she'd be

proving her abilities were reaching a plateau in which there was no room to go any higher. Ruby feared becoming stuck, that she'd forever remain the smallest and youngest of the group, who lacked the experience and true potential her fellow classmates had. The girl who got in two years early, and had shown her skills had peaked two years ago...

Looking at Yang's toned arms reminded Ruby that her own were still very slim, despite her ability to wield Crescent Rose.

Before she could lose herself in this pessimistic line of thought, their sparring was interrupted by the other half of their team.

"You girls done?" Blake asked as she and Weiss walked over the matted floors of the training ring.

"I'd say so," Yang shrugged, grabbing a towel to put over her shoulders. "You did great today!" She winked at her sister, and while Ruby knew the gesture was sincere, she couldn't help but feel she hadn't performed as well as Yang believed.

"We have a mission," Weiss said. "A recovery in the wilds east of Vale."

Ruby quickly went into 'focus mode,' as she liked to call it. A good team leader needed to act his part. "What are we recovering? Supplies, weapons, a missing team?"

"Artifact recovery." Blake corrected.

"Ugh, archeology?!" Yang's shoulders slumped backward as she arched her spine. "Why can't the eggheads handle that?"

Weiss glared in reproach. "I'll remind you that artifact recovery is a very important mission type. There are still many important, and potentially powerful relics, from the old days. Some which can still contain highly potent and versatile--"

"Okay, okay, I got it!" Yang blew a raspberry. "You don't have to give me the librarian act..."

"Alright, team RWBY!" Ruby quickly perked up, pushing her feelings of insecurity down. "We have a mission; let's go!"

Blake sniffed the air a few times and recoiled. "You two will hit the showers, and *then* we'll go. We still have to prepare everything anyway"

"Good call, Blake! Hygiene is important! A shower and we'll go."

"And packing," Weiss added. "We can't leave just like that."

"And get dinner!" Yang called out, her stomach rumbling right on time. "Can't go on an empty stomach!"

Blake rolled her eyes, doing her utmost to force an amused smile down.