

The day they were set to return to Beacon was cold, their biggest snowfall of winter according to the morning weather report. Already packed, it wasn't until the afternoon that the airships would be ferrying them back up to the ancient school, so Jaune had some time before he was to meet his friends at the airship terminal.

Time he had chosen to use wisely.

"So, like – where the *fuck* have you been?" a surly voice questioned, and turning, Jaune came face-to-face with the owner.

Melanie Malachite was a beauty, of that there was no doubt. But the expression on her face at that moment was one that would send most people packing. Her pretty green eyes were narrowed, lips pursed as her hand rested on a cocked hip. Her foot tapped against the floor, and Jaune had a feeling that if he said the wrong thing, she might very well just attack him right there in front of everyone.

"You have some nerve ignoring us," her twin, equally as beautiful, stood by her side. Miltia watched him with shrewd eyes, arms crossed beneath her breasts. Red to her sister's white, they drew the eye of everyone around them, but no one looked too long for fear of drawing their very visible ire.

Ire directed at him.

"Like, why don't we just kick his fucking ass for standing us up?" Melanie floated the idea, and it must have sounded appealing to Miltia whose eyes lit up at the suggestion. "Who does he think he is?"

"I bet he has some lame excuse," Miltia clucked her tongue. "Why else would he reach out to us? He thinks he can sweet talk us into standing down."

“Well?” Melanie demanded. “Let’s hear it, asshole. Tell us why we shouldn’t fuck you up.”

Oh yeah, they were *pissed*.

But Jaune had come prepared. Somewhat.

The store they’d met at was a very popular coffee hangout, one of those chain stores that had about fifty different flavors which could then be altered to suit whatever tastes you had. The line was out the door, young twenty-somethings clamoring for their caffeine fix, so he’d gone ahead and ordered beforehand.

The Malachite twins struck him as trendy girls, so he’d very carefully scanned the internet for the most popular, most talked about, most viral drinks at the current time. Seeing as it was winter, apparently the Pumpkin Spiced Latte was all the craze right now, even though it was a legacy drink. PSL for short, and he saw more than a few girls with them. Another was the iced chocolate almond-milk shaken espresso, and so he’d purchased one of each.

Instead of answering with words, he slid the drinks across the table towards them. They both blinked, staring at the cups dumbly for a moment before scoffing.

“He’s, like, trying to bribe us,” Melanie said, rolling her eyes.

“Unbelievable,” Miltia said.

Yet they picked up the drinks, and after a quick glance, swapped between them.

“Psh – he has good taste, I suppose,” Melanie said while sipping at the pumpkin spiced latte. A small bit of cream clung to her lip. “You’ve postponed your execution until we finish drinking these. You better start talking.”

“I was overseas,” he explained as they sat down opposite him, no longer looking like they were about to start a brawl in the middle of a packed store. “In Atlas. I was invited by one of my teammates, so I never received any of your messages until I returned.”

“Yeah, we saw,” Miltia said. “You were, like, all over the tabloids over there. Still are. Imagine our surprise when we came across your dumb, handsome face on Snaptalk.”

“Pyrrha Nikos, huh?” Melanie smirked. “Pyrrha Nikos – *and* Weiss Schnee? Aren’t you a fucking playboy.”

Jaune sighed. So those stories had made it across the ocean. He shouldn’t be surprised. While the internet wasn’t seamlessly connected between all the kingdoms, the restriction of the technology of the CCT system, they weren’t completely isolated, either.

It was only a matter of time before those articles made their way over here.

And not much time at that.

“I’m just saying that I didn’t mean to ignore your messages,” he said. “And I apologize if I made you think I was standing you up.”

“Hmph. What do you think, Miltia?”

“I don’t know, Mel. He doesn’t seem very sorry to me.”

In truth, he wasn’t, she was right. Jaune wasn’t in the habit of being rude, but there was something that was nagging at him, something that he’d been wanting to figure out since it happened. He didn’t know these girls. Not well. And the only reason they’d pressed for a date was to piss Yang off, he wasn’t stupid. They had no love for her, and they saw him as a way to rile her up. He very much doubted they really wanted to have a real date with him.

The question he had was this; how involved had they been in what happened at the Violet Room?

Not just them, but Junior.

It was why he’d called them here. To find out.

“You’re right,” he said, much to their surprise. “I’m not as sorry as I could be. Do you want to know why?”

“Come on then, tell us,” Melanie leaned forward. “This should be good.”

“Ah! I think I know what he wants to ask us,” Miltia looked him up and down. “This is about that bitch, isn’t it?”

Jaune frowned. "Don't call her that."

"Oh, I see, I see – like, you want to know if we were involved in that little incident," Melanie gave a small laugh. They'd caught on without him even having to say anything. They'd obviously known he'd have suspicions. "You don't trust us?"

"I don't know you," he reminded them. "Other than the fact that I know you hate Yang."

"We so do," Miltia nodded. "Hate her, *so much*."

"She's the worst," Melanie agreed. "But did we, like, set you guys up? Not our style. If we wanted to fuck her up, we'd have done it ourselves. Not that we aren't happy something happened. You guys did quite a number on the Black Lotus, their rep took a huge hit. Some Beacon brats went right into the heart of their territory and schooled them. It's been the talk of the underworld."

"And not just that – *Raven Branwen* was sighted," Miltia tapped her nails against the table. "It's put the fear of God in a lot of people. You, like, made some serious waves."

Jaune remembered Junior's words.

*"Now get out of here and go fuck up their lives. I'm counting on it being spectacular, don't let me down."*

They'd been counting on *something* happening. Mostly because of their own experience with dealing with Yang. She'd trashed his club, so Junior had been hoping for the same thing to happen. To bring down a rival gang a peg or two.

“So you had nothing to do with what happened?” he asked, just to confirm it.

“What if we did?” Melanie taunted. “What would you do about it?”

He didn’t answer, just staring at the pair of them. They shared a look, the sisters completely identical in their mannerisms, and then they both rolled their eyes dramatically.

“You can, like, settle down,” Melanie groused. “We just knew that blondie would cause some shit. She can’t help herself. A fucking wrecking ball is what she is. But I guess those guys at the docks had a grudge.”

“We heard what they tried to do,” Miltia’s lip curled in disgust. “Pigs. We’re glad you fucked them up. Maybe your friend will think twice about messing with our kind, though.”

“She got that message, loud and clear,” Jaune said coldly, and they both sat up at that, not expecting it. The tension skyrocketed. “So – how about we start again?”

He offered a hand.

They both blinked.

“Jaune. Jaune Arc,” he said.

Slowly, a smile appeared on both of their faces.

“Look at this,” Melanie laughed. “He has fangs after all.”

Miltia nodded. “You just have to rile him up a bit.”

“Yang won’t be bothering you guys again.”

“You sure about that, big guy?” Melanie took his hand, her palm smooth and warm. They shook hands lightly, and then her hand was replaced by Miltia’s.

“I’m sure.”

“Mm, we’ll see,” Miltia made sure to caress his palm as she let go.

He might be wrong, but he believed them when they said they had nothing to do with what happened at the Violet Room. As much as they hated Yang, and as ruthless as they could be, the genuine disgust on Miltia’s face had convinced him that at the very least, they weren’t involved. Junior? That was harder to tell, but it didn’t matter.

After what happened, Yang wouldn’t be seeking gangs out anytime soon.

“I like a guy who has a bit of an edge,” Melanie sipped at her latte. “You had the looks, of course. You’re, like, a total hottie and everything – but it’s no fun if they’re lame. Right, sis?”

Miltia traced her lips with a finger. "Riiiiight."

"You know – we don't mind sharing," Melanie whispered, her voice growing husky. "Have you ever had twins before?"

Maybe it was the incredible night he spent with Nora, Weiss and Blake because her suggestive words did not garner the expected rise out of him, even to his own surprise. He just chuckled lightly, but that only seemed to intrigue them even more.

Miltia made a sound of interest. "You're, like, way more interesting than we first thought."

"I know, right? We totally lucked out," Melanie shot him a saucy smirk, practically undressing him with her eyes. "I can't wait to see where this leads..."

Jaune cleared his throat. "Well, ladies – it was nice to see you again, but I've got to be going."

"Aww, how come? This has hardly been a date," Miltia pouted, reaching across the table to grab his hand. "You can't go now. That wasn't part of the deal."

"Another time," he promised, and he meant it. He wasn't in the habit of breaking a promise, and he had given them his word. He would take them out on a date. But not before he let Weiss, Nora and Blake know. "I have somewhere to be."

Melanie clucked her tongue. "You got our hopes up for nothing. Looks like you get to miss out seeing us try on tiny little bikinis."

"It's winter," he reminded her.

Her smile was laden with promise. "Who said we have to go to a store to show them off?"

He left, the sound of their giggles lingering in the air. Those two were dangerous, but Jaune had gained some measure of immunity. If he'd been hit with those innuendos a few months ago, he'd have been beyond embarrassed.

He'd developed a thicker skin when it came to teasing from the fairer sex.

Though not too thick.

Returning to his hotel, he finished packing his bags before calling a cab. The ride to the airship terminal was quick, the roads freshly plowed. Collecting his things, he paid the driver and then wheeled his bags inside, finding the terminal for returning students.

It was here that he experienced a sense of *deja vu*. Sitting on a bench were two familiar heads, and smiling, he made his way over.

"Nora," he called out. "Ren."

"Jaune-Jaune," Nora hopped up, dressed in a cute pink peacoat, white skirt and pale pink thermal stockings. She gave a little twirl. "Don't I look good?"

"You look great," he agreed, returning her hug as she flew into his arms.

Ren stood and shook his head, wearing his own peacoat, this one a dark green with gold buttons.

"It's so cold here," Nora complained.

Jaune laughed. "It doesn't hold a candle to what it was like in Atlas."

It wasn't long before Blake showed up, dressed in a purple woollen sweater and black thermals, her lovely legs drawing his eye. A black scarf was looped around her head, protecting her neck and kitty ears.

She looked a little bit ridiculous.

Nora giggled, Blake shooting her a disgruntled look.

"It's cold, okay?" she grunted. "I don't care how it looks. It's keeping me warm."

Weiss arrived with Pyrrha, the pair of them dressed in matching coats, white and red respectively. The heiress was completely at ease, wearing her usual combat skirt underneath with no stockings, though Pyrrha wore long pants.

“Pyrrha, Weiss,” Jaune greeted.

Weiss’ cheeks flared, her eyes lighting up. She’d been a little bit shy since their ‘team bonding exercise’ as Nora liked to call it, though he wasn’t concerned. It was just taking her a little longer for her to adjust to the new norm. The other two had plenty of time to adapt.

“Hello,” Pyrrha grinned, eyes sparkling.

The last to arrive were Yang and Ruby, the latter wearing a long red scarf that flapped behind her alongside her red cloak as she ran. Yang was dressed in a yellow turtleneck and jeans.

“Hi guys~!” Ruby nearly slipped, Jaune reaching out at the last moment and catching her.

“Oof~!”

“Gotcha,” Jaune straightened her up, and she beamed up at him, her cheeks flushed from the cold.

“Thanks Jaune!”

Yang shot him a fond look, shooting in to give him a quick hug. As everyone else exchanged greetings, he pulled her aside.

“What’s up?” she asked, curious.

"I met with Melanie and Miltia this morning."

She blinked, at first confused before the light went off in her head.

"Oh, those bitches," she scowled. "What the hell did you meet with them for?"

"I did promise, remember?" he reminded her.

She grimaced. "Urgh, I forgot about that. So? How was your *date*?" she pulled a face.

"It wasn't really a date, I still owe them," he said. "But I needed to speak with them. They blew my phone up while I was away, and this was really the only chance to talk before we were back at Beacon."

"Why'd you want to talk to them for?"

"I wanted to know if they were involved in what happened at the Violet Room."

Yang instantly turned grim, her shoulders growing tense.

"And?" she asked quietly. "What did they say?"

"They claim that they had no involvement, and I know," he cut off quickly when her mouth opened. "They could be lying. Why would they admit it, right? But I believe them."

"You do?"

He nodded. "They... heard what happened. Details. I'm not sure how many details but enough. If nothing else, Miltia was disgusted by what they tried to do."

Yang's lips pursed but she didn't refute it.

"As for Junior, well... we'll probably never know for sure," Jaune admitted. "He wanted you to cause the Black Lotus trouble, and we did. As far as he is concerned, he probably considers it a win."

Yang sighed. "Yeah, I guess you're right. When I busted his club, that would have been pretty humiliating for him. Now that we did worse to a rival gang, it's probably made him save face a bit... tch, fucking criminals."

"I said you wouldn't be messing with them any more. At least not for the foreseeable future."

"Not unless they try to mess with me," she agreed. "I've had enough of that shit for the time being. I learned my lesson," she gave him a fond look. "A certain someone made sure it wasn't a lesson too harsh to come back from."

"I'll always have your back, Yang. Whenever you need it."

She touched his hand, their fingers curling together before she remembered where she was and let go. Turning, they spotted Blake watching them quietly, her lips quirked in a half-smile, amused.

"Damn cat," Yang muttered, cheeks rosy.

There was still some time before boarding, so Ruby and Nora went and purchased some snacks. Jaune ended up with a bar of chocolate, and claimed a bench of his own, nibbling on it as he watched other students begin to gather in larger and larger numbers.

"What were you two talking about?" Blake whispered in his ear, leaning down behind him. Her scent wafted across his nose, and he breathed in deeply.

"Just about some things to do with the Black Lotus," he said.

She moved around the bench and sat down, concerned.

"Has something happened?"

Jaune felt a swell of affection for her, seeing the worry written on her face.

"Nothing like that," he assured her. "I was just speaking to some people from another gang, people Yang knows. I promised them a meeting, though I haven't fulfilled those obligations properly yet."

He told her about Junior and the twins, and how they'd gained access to him. Blake's worry faded, though she looked annoyed.

"Don't they know you're taken?"

"No. I wasn't exactly forthcoming with that information," he said. "I'd rather them not know too much about my personal life. They're criminals, after all."

"Jaune... you aren't going to seduce them, are you?"

"I doubt I could if I tried," at her doubtful look, he said, "Trust me. They just like to mess with people, asking me for a date was their attempt at riling Yang up."

"Hmm. Well, they're stepping on a lot of toes and they don't even know it," Blake poked his cheek, eyes narrowed. "Don't go falling for other girls."

"What about Yang?" he asked.

Blake smirked. "That's okay."

"Ruby?"

She bit her lip. "It's cute... and kinda hot."

"Pyrrha?"

"Look at you, trying to collect the whole set," Blake leaned in. "It's okay if it's us. Nora agrees."

"It's not that I think that will happen—," he started saying but she laughed, patting his shoulder.

"Oh Jaune, it's already started," she giggled.

"Jaune!"

Looking away from Blake, he saw Velvet trotting over happily.

"Hey Velvet," he greeted.

"Blake," Velvet continued warmly.

"Hey," Blake waved. "Excited to be going back to Beacon?"

Velvet nodded quickly, her tall ears swaying.

“It was nice to have a break, but I’m ready to be back,” she said. “Oh, um – can I?”

She pulled out her camera, holding it up.

“Sure,” Jaune said. “Blake?”

“Yes, I don’t mind,” she looped an arm through his, leaning in closer. “Get closer to me.”

Jaune leaned in, their heads almost touching. Velvet beamed and snapped a picture, and that drew the attention of everyone else.

“Oh, oh, do us, do us,” Nora skipped over and jumped on top of Jaune and Blake, the pair of them hurriedly grabbing at her before she could roll off them.

“Woah, Nora,” Jaune snorted as she kicked her legs like a happy child, giving a ridiculous pose as she lay across their laps.

Velvet laughed and took another shot, and then everyone crowded around for a group photo.

“Make a funny face,” Velvet encouraged, and everyone did, poking out tongues, stretching their mouths with their fingers, rolling their eyes. Yang leaned heavily on his back, while Weiss sat on top of Nora’s stomach like a princess claiming her throne. Ruby and Pyrrha gave the peace sign, pressing their faces together as they laughed, while Ren threw an arm around Jaune’s shoulders.

She took several shots, and then they made her set it up so she could get into the photo as well. As the timer ticked down, she panicked, attempting to find a good spot, but Weiss made the decision for her, pulling her in so she was sitting on Nora as well, his partner squawking.

“Hey, why am I a seat?” Nora complained, still sprawled across his and Blake’s lap.

“Hush,” Weiss placed a finger on her lips, silencing her as the camera went off.

They were drawing a lot of looks from other passengers, but they didn’t care.

Then finally, it was time. They boarded their airship and found seats, and it wasn’t long until they were airborne. Jaune watched out the window as Vale disappeared below, its old buildings covered in a layer of snow. The lake at the foot of the cliffs was still as a mirror, reflecting the green light of Beacon, the water shimmering as they ascended. Dozens of other aircraft joined them in their approach, some coming from Vale, some from further afield.

When they disembarked, it was to a sea of students filled with excitement, the chatter deafening.

“Bun!” a familiar voice called out, and Coco appeared, wrapped up for the cold weather but still as stylish as ever.

“Coco,” Velvet waved happily. “Cya guys!”

“Bye,” they all chorused as she ran over to meet her teammate.

Jaune looked around, spotting several faces that had grown familiar to him but hadn't seen in a month. Cardin trudged through the crowd in one of his typical moods, scowl firmly fixed on his face while his teammates hurried to catch up, bags slung over their shoulders. Gray Wood and Melissa Stone, the pair nodding his way when they spotted him. He nodded back.

"Come on, let's get back to our rooms," Nora hauled her luggage. "I want to get warm!"

The eight of them made their way back to the dorms, following everyone else. Their room was pristine, just as they'd left it, though the cleaners had clearly been here. There was no musty smell from being locked up for a month, nor was there any dust. Nora made her way over to her bed and flopped down, groaning loudly.

"My bed," she hugged the mattress as if it were a long lost friend. "My beautiful bed!"

Blake snickered.

"Yes, well – I can agree with the sentiment," Weiss said, looking around. "It's good to be back."

Jaune began unpacking his things. He had more clothes now. Not just stuff he'd purchased, but many of the clothes that Weiss had prepared for him in Atlas. Curious, Blake ran her fingers across the fabric of one of the suits.

"Where did you get this?" she asked.

Jaune nodded at Weiss. "I had to dress my best, or I would embarrass her."

Weiss scowled. "I just didn't want them looking down on yo—," she paused, seeing their amused smiles. "You're teasing me. Stop. I won't allow it."

Jaune laughed. She could be really cute when she got like this.

"Think of all the naughty things we can get up to in here," Nora said, her expression lewd. "Now that you've all had a piece."

Weiss' cheeks turned pink.

"We shall *not* turn our room into – into some debauched den of pleasure."

"Why not?" Nora whined. "I thought you enjoyed it?"

She struggled to find words.

"The walls are pretty thin here," Blake said quietly.

"That just means we'll have to be quiet," Nora then paused. "Hm. That might be hard with that fat dick of his."

"I'm going to have a shower," he said, escaping the conversation entirely.

“We could join you?” Nora offered as he gathered a change of clothes and skipped into the bathroom, slamming the door to her giggles.

She was a temptress of the highest degree.

Undressing, he stepped into the shower and allowed the hot water to soothe his muscles, and drive away any of the chill that lingered from the outdoors. Resting his head against tiles, he smiled.

It was good to be back.