

Jaune slipped in and out of consciousness as the surface he lay on rocked, muffled voices speaking all around him. There was a dull roar in the background that reminded him of the engines of an airship, but then he was out again until the next time he awoke, he was laying upon a soft bed.

He blinked blearily as his vision focused. A familiar ceiling met his eyes, that of the infirmary at Beacon. It had been a while since he'd been here, but it wasn't something he would soon forget. Sluggishly, he turned his head and saw that he shared a room with someone else. Laying on the bed next to his was Nora, her ginger hair alerting him to her identity.

Jaune sat up quickly, a surge of adrenaline spiking through his system when his memories came flooding back. Mountain Glenn, the White Fang – and that Grimm. A monster unlike any other, towering above them, fear itself manifested.

And then the Dust explosion.

Jaune swallowed, his throat dry. A bottle of water sat on the bedside table. Reaching for it, he uncapped it and chugged it down quickly. It wasn't enough to quench his thirst.

"I see you're awake," a voice said from the door. Jaune jumped, looking over and was greeted by the imposing form of General Ironwood.

"General, sir," Jaune said roughly, clearing his throat. Why did he feel like he'd swallowed a cup of sand? "What happened?"

"What happened is that you and your team stopped a plot that could have resulted in thousands of deaths," Ironwood said warmly, his stern features lightening as he smiled. "Your actions – and the actions of your fellow students – have broken the White Fang's grip on this city, and helped to restore order in Vale."

Jaune blinked.

Ironwood chuckled. "I suppose you are wondering about the specifics?"

He nodded. "A little bit, sir."

Ironwood approached and pulled out a chair, sitting by his bed.

"We were alerted to the situation when half of the city of Mountain Glenn collapsed into a newly formed sink hole, the small quake rocking the region with tremors. The Huntsmen and soldiers on standby moved in, and rounded up those White Fang who fled the scene, and then engaged in a rescue mission to dig you and your fellows out of the rubble."

Ironwood shook his head.

"You are *very* lucky, Mr. Arc. While your part of the cavern did collapse, it was not nearly as bad as the rest. Though in truth, you should have been crushed regardless – but your semblance protected you and those around you, and allowed your Professor to teleport you to a safer location. It pushed her to the limit, and she remains bedridden but recovering."

Professor Peach was now his favorite teacher, and he wouldn't hear anything against her.

"Those White Fang that survived the encounter were more than willing to share information, and it has resulted in several raids throughout the city. We have confiscated money, weapons, Dust, and military hardware that was going to be used on an attack during the Vytal Festival itself."

That was... incredible!

"I..." he didn't know what to say. "My team? Team CFVY?"

"They're fine, though Ms. Adel sustained a horrible injury to her arm. It appears that your semblance may have attempted to heal it, though I gather it wasn't given enough time. She'll require extensive treatment, though her hand and arm remains functional. She still wishes to compete."

Jaune sighed. That was a relief.

"I've been instructed to inform Headmaster Ozpin when you've awoken, for he would like to speak with you," Ironwood then said. "You – and Ms. Belladonna. One of the White Fang members we captured was only willing to speak if we promised her that she could meet with the pair of you. We agreed on your behalf, and her extensive information is what allowed us such success."

He didn't mind.

"Right, uh – that's fine," he said. "Should I get up?"

"No, that shouldn't be necessary. Rest, Mr. Arc. The Headmaster will come to you."

When Ironwood was gone, Jaune slipped out of bed and padded over to Nora's bedside. He felt a little unsteady on his feet. Exhaustion, but of a different kind. His muscles felt fine, but it felt

like he was moments from floating away. Drawn thin. Was this the result of overusing his semblance? He'd used it so many times that it wouldn't surprise him.

She was fast asleep, her mouth half open as she snored. He caressed her cheek lovingly, his thumb brushing across smooth skin before he called out, "Nora?"

She didn't respond.

Jaune gave her a gentle shake. "Nora, wake up."

She snorted, her brow furrowing slightly before smoothing out, her lips smacking as her mouth opened and closed before settling. Smirking, he leaned down and placed a kiss on her unsuspecting lips. For a moment, there was nothing, and then she began pressing back against him.

"Mmm," she hummed as her eyes fluttered, mouth opening gladly when she felt his tongue. Sitting on the side of her bed, he kissed her slowly, their lips moving together languidly, his tongue curling against her own. One of her hands found the arm he was bracing himself with, grasping it firmly as her movements became firmer. "*Mmwah~! Mmmng~!*"

Slowly, he pulled back and smiled down at her as she blinked at him lazily.

"What was that for?" she asked softly, her cheeks turning pink.

"I felt like kissing you," he admitted.

She smiled giddily. "I could get used to waking up like this."

Then she blinked, eyes widening slightly.

"Oh – the Grimm! Jaune, where...?"

"We're back at Beacon," he reassured her, leaning forward to rest his forehead against her own. "We almost got crushed, but... it seems like Professor Peach got us out of there."

"She's my favorite teacher," Nora said, mirroring his thoughts from earlier. "She's the coolest."

"Yeah," Jaune said with a chuckle. "No one is as cool as her."

Nora pecked him on the lips again before he sat up, pulling Nora upright so she could sit up against her pillows.

"I need a drink."

They'd only left one bottle.

"I can go get you something."

She gave him a grateful look. “Thanks.”

From what he remembered, there was a vending machine just outside of the infirmary. Jaune found his clothes, armor and weapon inside the nearby closet, still covered in dirt and sweat. Reaching into the pocket of his pants, he pulled out his scroll. There were messages from his friends; several from Ruby and Yang, a few from Pyrrha and Ren. They’d heard.

He quickly sent them all messages, letting them know he was okay. Then he shuffled out into the hallway.

“Jaune?”

Weiss was sitting on the bench outside one of the other rooms. He wasn’t sure, but she looked even paler than usual. He hadn’t been the only one to push himself with his semblance. That summoning must have taken a lot out of her, even with his help.

“Weiss,” he said, walking over. “Are you okay? How are you feeling?”

“Tired. Drained. But I can’t get back to sleep,” she admitted, offering a hand. He took it and she pulled herself up, leaning against his chest. He wrapped an arm around her, cradling her small body against his own. “We made it out.”

“Yeah,” he said. “We made it out.”

“That was... horrible,” she said, nuzzling her cheek against him. “I think I’d like our next mission to be painting a fence – or mowing lawn. What do you think?”

Jaune grinned. "I'm right there with you."

They stood there for several long moments before she shifted, standing on her tippy toes to peck him on the lips. She graced him with a lovely smile as she leaned back, eyes soft.

"You were amazing."

"So were you," he said. "Are you thirsty? Hungry?"

Her stomach growled loudly and she blushed. Jaune smirked.

"Wow. That was pretty loud."

"S-Shut up," she swatted him softly. "I'm a little famished."

Her stomach gurgled again. Jaune laughed as she scowled, her cheeks growing hotter.

"Come on, let's get something. Nora wants a drink. She probably wants food, as well," he glanced around. "Do you know where Blake is?"

Weiss shook her head. "No. When I woke up, her bed was empty. I only know it was her bed because her weapon is still in our room."

They raided the vending machine outside, buying a half dozen drinks and a bunch of pre-made sandwiches. Not exactly the meal of kings, but right now? They were so hungry that even the cheapest, nastiest food would taste like it was served at a three star restaurant, and the food here at Beacon was never bad.

“Weiss,” Nora said happily as they returned with their bounty. “You’re alive!”

Weiss scoffed. “Of course I am. Did you really think I would perish when you did not? We go together or not at all.”

Morbid, but the sentiment was sweet. They gathered around Nora’s bed, pulling some chairs over so they could indulge in their little feast. He handed Nora a bottle of water and a sandwich before tearing open one of the sandwiches for himself. It was ham and mustard with cheese, but the ham was thick and moist, sweet and smokey. Proper glazed ham between soft bread.

Yep. Beacon never had bad food.

Jaune dug in, devouring his sandwich and cracking open a can of soda. Weiss tried to restrain herself but after the first bite of her sandwich – smoked chicken and cranberry sauce – she couldn’t control herself, eating ravenously. Nora chugged her water and then started eating as well, all of them silent as they filled their stomachs.

“I see everyone is here,” a familiar voice said, and turning, Jaune saw Headmaster Ozpin standing in the doorway. He wasn’t alone.

Blake slipped by him and rushed over, and Jaune only had a second to realize what was coming before she slammed into him. He almost fell off his chair, Blake hugging him furiously.

“Woah, Blake – I’m fine,” he said quickly, her kitty ears flicking wildly.

She wasn’t the only one with Ozpin.

It was his first time seeing her face but she was immediately recognizable because of her hair; a long, brown ponytail. She was pretty, Jaune thought, her face slightly rounded at the cheeks but with a sharp chin, her nose slender and cute, her eyes almost silver. Her skin was lightly tanned, and marked with what appeared to be freckles, though they were much too large. She stared at him as Blake rested in his arms, frowning.

This was Ilia – the White Fang girl that Blake knew. The girl they’d fought against, and then fought with.

She was dressed in the Beacon uniform, which took Jaune a few seconds to register. It suited her, but Jaune knew she wasn’t a student here. He didn’t know everyone that attended Beacon but Blake would have mentioned her, and she can’t have been much older than them if she was at all. She looked to be their age.

Blake released him and then hugged Weiss next, and Ilia’s expression grew harsher still. Lastly, Blake hugged Nora who returned her embrace enthusiastically, bending her spine.

“Ack, Nora – too hard!” Blake groaned.

Ozpin chuckled, stepping forward. Today, he had his mug firmly in hand, sipping from it casually as he watched over them for a moment, allowing them to settle.

Jaune decided to speak first.

“General Ironwood said they’ve made arrests.”

Ozpin nodded as Nora let go of Blake.

“They have. With the help of Ms. Amitola and her comrades, the White Fang presence in Vale has taken a fatal blow. They are broken.”

Ilia’s mouth pulled into a taut line. She didn’t appear impressed or happy about it, yet it had been her information that had made it possible. Why had she turned on them?

“Sir, how long have we been out?”

“Almost an entire day,” Ozpin said. “You were all in rough shape. Understandable, considering what you’ve been through. Once again, you found yourself across the battlefield from a monster you didn’t have any business meeting. The life of a Huntsman is unpredictable, this is true – but twice in a few months, Mr. Arc... it appears you and Ms. Valkyrie have some very bad luck when it comes to Grimm.”

“Did we kill it?” Nora asked eagerly.

Ozpin nodded, smiling. “Yes. You killed it. A second Silver Star, as students – you are already compiling quite the resume. Your involvement in bringing down the White Fang on our shores will also make quite the impression.”

Ilia cleared her throat, disgruntled.

Ozpin hummed. “Well – Ms. Amitola wishes to speak to you. I shall step out, but Mr. Arc... Team JBWN – good work.”

Once Ozpin left, the atmosphere turned awkward. Ilia stared at them, and they stared back. She looked like she was trying to find the words for something, but whenever she was about to speak, her jaw would tighten up, her lips remaining pressed together.

“Ilia...” Blake said softly.

“Don’t,” the girl snapped. “Just... don’t.”

Her eyes lingered on Weiss, complicated, before they shifted to him.

“You saved us.”

Jaune blinked.

“What?”

It looked like it pained her to say it.

“Whatever you did... with your voice. That power. We would have died if not for you,” she grimaced. “I was frozen in terror and when I heard your voice, I could move again. I felt strong. And... the Grimm. That was your plan. Even though we were your enemy, you saved us.”

Jaune didn't know what to say. It wasn't like he had been specifically trying to save them. He hadn't even known that his semblance could do that. Project through his voice? Had that ever happened before? No, he'd just been trying to rally everyone to fight together because if they didn't, they were going to die.

He'd also killed some of those White Fang down in that cavern. His sword had bitten into the flesh of those without aura. In the moment, he hadn't thought anything of it. Now? It just made him feel numb. He'd killed. They all had.

That was the life of a Huntsman, though, wasn't it?

“Even when the city collapsed on us, you protected us then, as well,” Ilia continued. “You shielded us... and then your Professor got us to safety. I... thank you.”

Jaune thought of something to say, and settled on the easiest. “You're welcome.”

Their eyes met, and he could see the sincerity. Ilia reminded him of Blake. A good girl caught up with bad people. Lost. Blake had gotten out when things went too far.

Blake couldn't contain herself any longer.

“Ilia, why were you helping them?” she demanded, her voice raw. “You know what they were trying to do! Why would you get involved in that? Why are you even here in Vale in the first place?”

At first, Jaune didn't think she would answer. The two faunus stared at one another, the moment tense. There was a story there – a past that Jaune wasn't privy to. Thoughts and feelings known only to them. A friendship, once. Maybe even as close as family; sisters.

Then Ilia sighed, looking away.

"I was sent here by Sienna Khan to watch over Adam," she muttered. "Your cell was sent to Vale to observe and lay the groundwork for expansion, and to hamper Schnee Dust Company shipments whenever possible," Weiss didn't react, her face blank. "There was no mention in his reports about attacking third party stores and robbing them of their Dust, or the growing resentment among the people of Vale. We had to find out about it from the Vale News Network."

Lisa Lavender and her reports.

"Sienna was furious," Ilia admitted. "Vale has been... sympathetic to our cause in the past, more so than any other kingdom. She wanted to make inroads here, establish a White Fang presence and... negotiate. I was sent to inform Adam to cease his attacks, and to watch over him and report back to Sienna... but Adam has changed. He is further gone than any of us thought."

Her hands curled into fists.

"Once I discovered what his true goal was, he would never let me leave. I was constantly watched, and while he never threatened me with words..." she paused. "I knew that if I tried to flee, he would cut me down without a second thought."

"Adam..." Blake whispered.

“All I could do from then on is play along. Most of the Dust that was stolen was moved to Mountain Glenn. The rest was distributed around Vale to key locations to be detonated during the attack on Vale. He also had access to Atlesian military hardware. The latest version of their Paladin series, a fully mechanized battle suit – though only the prototype versions. I have no idea how he got them,” she shook her head. “Once the Vytal Festival was in full swing, they’d have sent that train into the heart of the city and used it and the Dust to blow a hole so wide they’d have no hope of filling it in, and then...”

“The Grimm,” Weiss said coldly.

Ilia grit her teeth, meeting Weiss’ eyes. “Yes. The Grimm.”

Drawn by fear, they’d have funneled down those subway tunnels and poured into Vale in the thousands. That monstrous Grimm they’d battled would have joined them, and Vale would have turned into a bloodbath.

“Adam trusted you, though,” Blake said, frowning. “Enough that you knew how to bring them down.”

“He trusted me enough – but not completely. I knew about the White Fang operations, but he was working with someone, but I don’t know who. I never met them, and he never shared who they were, but whoever they are, they had him spooked.”

Someone else?

“I don’t know what happened to him, but he isn’t the same person I remember,” Ilia continued. “Adam... he’s gone off the deep end, the coward even fled and left us behind to die...” she spat

angrily. "I... this isn't... striking out against those that harm our people, I am behind that cause. But killing thousands of innocent people... *for what?*"

Blake slowly approached her, and he saw Ilia tense.

"That is why I left," Blake implored. "We attacked a train bound for Vale, carrying Dust and equipment from the Schnee Dust Company. We'd secured the car and could have easily detached it from the rest of the train, but he wanted more than that. He wanted to make a statement, and kill those on board. I chose to oppose him."

"But you could have come back to us," Ilia said bitterly. "You could have come home – but you didn't! You've been here with..." she trailed off, eyes darting between them all. "You could have informed Supreme Leader Khan of what happened."

"I wasn't sure who I could trust," Blake said truthfully. "I had no way of knowing if Sienna Khan agreed with Adam's tactics or not. She is the one that started us down this path."

"...And what about me?" Ilia asked.

"What?"

"Did you not trust me?"

Blake made no words.

Ilia scoffed. “I see.”

“Ilia, it isn’t like that – I swear!”

“Then what is it like?” Ilia pressed. “Because from where I’m standing, that is exactly how it sounds.”

“Once I turned on Adam, do you really think I could just come back?” Blake shook her head. “No, it’s as you said – I was a traitor, and if I came to you, then what? I’d just be dragging you down with me. You’d be tarnished by association.”

“...You could have gone to your parents.”

Blake froze.

“They’ve been worried sick,” Ilia continued, and it was as if someone were twisting a knife in Blake’s gut. Her expression was wretched. “When we heard you had defected, I was sent to Menagerie first. Sienna Khan believed you may return home, but when that didn’t appear to be the case, I was reassigned to Adam.”

“I...” Blake floundered. “I couldn’t...”

“Why?”

"You *know* why!" Blake snapped. "I just couldn't... not after what I put them through, all for the wrong reasons! I couldn't face them."

"Isn't that just convenient for you, though? What about them?"

"I think that's enough," Weiss said quietly.

"I didn't ask you, Schnee," Ilia said sharply.

"Don't speak to her like that," Blake instantly leapt to her defence.

Ilia grimaced. "I understand why you turned away from our cause. I'm no better now," but then she pointed. "But she is the enemy, Blake. Her family! How can you sit there and be friends with her when the Schnee's have harmed our people so much!"

"She had nothing to do with that!" Blake argued. "She's our age, Ilia. Do you really think she had a say on how the company was run? Think!"

"But she reaped the benefits, didn't she?" Ilia asked, a sour note in her voice. "The riches, the glamor – while our people suffered, while my parents *died* in one of her family's mines, she sipped tea and ate cake, living a life of luxury! How is that fair?"

Blake opened her mouth furiously but it was Weiss she stopped her, reaching out to place a hand on her shoulder.

"It isn't fair," Weiss said calmly. "You're right. My family... My *father* has exploited your people, and our wealth has only swelled because of it. As much as I didn't wish it were so, I benefited from this. Unwillingly, unwittingly – but I did. I can't change that, I can't take it back – I can only change things going forward."

She approached Ilia slowly, the tanned girl taking a step back warily.

"My father controls the company, and that won't change any time soon," she said. "I am his heir – but that can change at any time. As simple as the stroke of a pen, he can replace me with my brother, and there would be nothing I can do about it. Once, I would have seen this as the worst possible outcome, though now..." she shook her head. "Nevertheless, my goal is to lead my grandfather's company one day, and I will tell you now – *I am not my father.*"

The words were said with such conviction that it resonated in their hearts. He saw the surprise written across Ilia's face as Weiss took another step.

"Perhaps that means nothing to you. Perhaps it will be too late. The day I succeed my father is years away, and the damage he has caused is already substantial. But I will not give in," another step, and another, until they were standing face to face. Ilia was tense, ready for an attack that would never come. "Once upon a time, the Schnee Dust Company stood for more than simply profits. They were respected, and in return, they respected those that worked for them. Faunus and human alike. My grandfather... he would be horrified to see what his company has become. I can only promise you this; that when I am in charge, things will be different."

She then offered a hand. Ilia blinked, staring at it.

"I know you believe us to be enemies. Not that long ago, I would have agreed," she looked down, contrite. "But we've already fought together once, and we triumphed. We are stronger together. And you've shown me by your actions that you do not believe in senseless hate. You want a better future for your people, and that isn't gained by the blood of innocents. Just as Blake took a stand, so did you."

Jaune smiled, feeling a welling of affection and respect for Weiss bloom deep within him as he watched her. Not just for her, but for Blake. They'd come so far.

"So I want to say thank you," Weiss said with all sincerity. "For standing up for the people of Vale. For not allowing this plan to continue."

Ilia stared at Weiss as if she were some alien creature, completely bewildered by this turn of events. Her eyes darted from Weiss to Blake, and back again.

"Ilia..." Blake whispered. "Trust me. Weiss is a good person, and... we were wrong. We were so wrong. Force will never make them respect and accept us. We need to find common ground and work together for our dream of equality to become a reality."

Weiss' arm remained outstretched. Ilia wavered, a war being fought behind those emotional eyes – and then, slowly, she reached out and grasped Weiss' hand. Jaune released a breath he hadn't even known he was holding, smiling as he shared a look with Nora.

"...This doesn't make us friends," Ilia muttered.

Weiss smiled. "I wouldn't dream of it."

"What happens next?" Blake asked.

Ilia released Weiss' hand.

“Your Headmaster wishes for me to open dialogue between him and Sienna Khan,” Ilia told them. “I’m to remain here for the time being but she needs to be informed of what happened here. Reports of the raids will be on the evening news, so we need to get ahead of it.”

“Can we talk more?” Blake asked, hesitantly. “Sometime?”

Ilia nodded, looking away shyly.

“Sure,” she mumbled. “We can... talk.”

A pair of soldiers were waiting for Ilia outside their room to escort her back to her quarters, wherever they were. She may have given them priceless information but she was still a member of the White Fang, and so she was technically a prisoner. Jaune had a feeling that it wouldn’t be forever, though.

When she left, Nora whistled. “Well... that was pretty intense, huh?”

Jaune tried and failed to smother a smile. “Nora...”

“What? I was about to tear up there for a minute, Weiss was talking so passionately and Blake was pouring out her deepest, darkest thoughts, I was feeling a little overwhelmed.”

The heiress clucked her tongue. “Perhaps you should have joined in, then.”

“And say what?” Nora asked incredulously. “Cool weapon? I had nothing.”

Blake giggled, and it broke the tense atmosphere that had developed throughout the conversation. Jaune shot Nora a grateful look, one she returned with a small smile, her eyes crinkling. He could always trust her to lighten the mood.

“What are you looking at us like that for?” Weiss demanded when she spotted him looking at her and Blake with fond eyes. “Stop it.”

“Stop what?”

“Whatever that is,” she complained. “Like you’re a proud parent.”

“Maybe I am.”

“It’s embarrassing. Don’t,” she said as her ears turned red. “Stop!”

“I’m just looking at you.”

“Avert your eyes this instant.”

“I can’t,” he admitted. “You were too inspiring.”

Nora laughed.

“Both of you,” he said warmly. “Three months ago, you couldn’t stand each other... and now you are working together on faunus relations. I’m proud of you.”

“I feel like I’m being mocked,” Weiss muttered.

Blake’s ears flicked back and forth, a sign of her delight. Warm amber eyes settled on him, and she made a quick decision, hopping over and pecking him on the lips.

“Maybe we learned from a good example?” she said teasingly.

Jaune pecked her back, and then they fell into a longer kiss. Jaune cupped her cheek, thumb caressing her soft skin as their mouths moved together slowly, lovingly.

“See that, Weiss?” Nora pointed. “That’s how you receive praise. Kitty likes it.”

“Don’t call me kitty,” Blake mumbled between kisses, sighing into Jaune’s mouth as their tongues twirled.

“Hmph~! It isn’t that I’m opposed to praise, I just think he is being a little cheeky,” she then frowned. “Are you two going to stop?”

Blake whined as Jaune pulled away.

“Do you want a kiss?” Jaune asked.

Weiss’ eyes narrowed.

“Stop being so cheeky!”

“I can’t help it,” he said, approaching her. A soft, pretty pink hue dusted her cheeks. “Now come here.”

Weiss surrendered to him once his lips touched hers, one of his hands settling comfortably on her waist. She sagged against him as they kissed, her little sounds of pleasure as their tongues rolled together a little too erotic.

He felt his body respond.

But now wasn’t the time for *that*.

Jaune pulled away reluctantly.

“Do any of you know where Coco’s room is?”

He had something to do. Blake showed him the way. She was only a few rooms down, and she wasn't alone. Velvet sat in a chair beside her bed, her rabbit ears drooping as she dozed in an awkward position. Coco perked up when he lightly knocked on the door frame.

"Jaune," she said, surprised. "What are you doing here?"

It was one of the rare times he'd seen her without her glasses, her big brown eyes blinking at him as he approached. There had never been any doubt that Coco was an attractive young woman, but without her glasses, it made her features seem softer; innocent. Jaune wasn't sure what it was, but she definitely had that element that skewed towards cute much like Ruby. Rounded cheeks, and wide eyes.

She was sitting up against the headboard, her injured arm bandaged and resting in her lap.

"I wanted to see you," he said. "Are you feeling alright?"

"Could be better," she admitted dryly, holding up her arm with a wince. "This thing feels pretty tender but we're all still alive, so I count that as a win."

"General Ironwood mentioned that you'll require extensive treatment."

Coco nodded. "Yeah. That attack stripped the skin off my arm. I thought it hurt like a bitch at the time, but without adrenaline dulling the pain, it feels like my arm is on fire. The painkillers help, but..."

"I think I might be able to help."

She blinked. "Oh?"

"I'm sure you have an idea about how my semblance works," he approached. "But basically, I can amplify aura."

"So that's why I felt like a million lien when you started shouting," Coco gave him a considering look. "That's a pretty nifty ability, I gotta say."

"It is," he nodded. "When I amplify the aura of another person, it amplifies everything. Including the healing properties of aura."

She caught on quickly. "So you want to try it with my arm."

"If you want me to," Jaune said. "Ironwood mentioned that my semblance may have already tried to heal it a little. I was hoping I could do more than just a little."

"You'd do that for me?" she asked.

"Of course. Why wouldn't I?"

She looked him up and down before shaking her head. "Sorry. I can be a little cynical sometimes. Drives Bun nuts, but I know the world isn't all sunshine and daisies, and people aren't much different. But I know you're a good guy, Jaune. You stood up for Vel here, when she needed it. You think it'll work?"

“There’s only one way to find out, right?”

Coco smirked. “Yeah, I guess so.”

She held up her arm, expression pinched. Jaune moved forward and cradled it gently, one hand bracing her elbow while the other settled at her wrist. For a moment, he thought that maybe it wasn’t a good idea to use his semblance again after pushing it as far as he had. Especially since he was feeling a little stretched.

But he ignored that voice and focused, going slow. His aura responded, and activating his semblance, he heard Coco gasp. A soft mocha hue surrounded her, her aura responding, and Jaune felt that she actually had a lot of it. Much more than anyone on his team, and even more than Professor Peach.

“Oh,” Coco exclaimed, blinking rapidly. “That feels... woah, even better than before. So this is what the real deal feels like, huh? Damn, that’s awesome.”

Her fingers twitched, that slightly pained expression vanishing as their mingled aura got to work.

“How does your arm feel?” he asked.

“Tingly,” she said, curling and uncurling her hand. “It feels... weird. A little like pins and needles, but not painful or off-putting.”

They remained like that for a few minutes, Jaune feeding her power slowly, making sure not to push too hard. Even this much felt draining to him, even though he knew his aura was replenished. It wasn't the amount he had, but something else.

When he felt like it would be bad to continue, he stopped. His semblance faded, and for a moment, Jaune felt a bout of dizziness. He braced himself against Coco's bed, a little winded.

"Jaune?" Coco asked, panicked. "Are you okay?"

He nodded. "I'm fine. Just... a little tired. I pushed myself a little too hard down in that cavern, I think."

She frowned. "Then this could have waited, you idiot. Why were you thinking?"

He chuckled weakly, and fell into the chair beside her bed, opposite Velvet. "I was thinking your arm couldn't wait."

She scowled.

"How does it feel?"

Her expression cleared as she moved her arm up and down without a hint of pain. Blinking, she reached for the bandages and began unwinding them.

What greeted them was scarred, but healed skin. The last time he'd seen her arm, the muscle had been exposed, wet and weeping. Now? New skin had formed, not scabbed over but actual skin, though it was warped, not smooth. What you would expect to see from a burn victim, though perhaps a little less damaged.

Coco stared at it in surprise, touching it with her fingers.

"It hurts to touch," she admitted. "But not much. More like irritation than anything. I... Jaune, this is..."

With Amber, he'd been able to erase the scarring completely until only discoloration remained. He'd used a lot more aura for her, but he had a feeling it had less to do with how much aura he used and how different Amber's aura had been. This was probably as good as he could get Coco's arm.

"The doctors are going to flip," Coco said in wonder. "They were talking about skin grafts. I wasn't looking forward to it."

Jaune smiled. "I'm glad I could help."

Coco's eyes were filled with warmth as she said, "You're lucky I like girls, or I'd jump you right here."

He laughed.