**Chapter 97**

Pyrrha Nikos *loved* to watch her man work.

Professor Port was, despite the severity of the situation, treating their deployment to Gabbro as the teaching exercise it was *originally* supposed to be, allowing Jaune, as team ABYN’s commander, to take the lead, something that had gone over *her* teammate’s heads, though not above Ms. Celadon’s, however their professor had had a word with her in private that made her hold her tongue.

Now, the remaining Huntsman, as well as the elite members of the Gabbro city guard, those who had Aura or were in command positions, had gathered right outside the city walls.

“Welcome everyone,” her Dragon mate greeted them all, stepping forward, standing on a small platform of Ice he’d formed with his Flames, the cold misting outwards slightly. “So, I’m sure *some* of you have questions about what’s going on, and I’ve been given the go ahead to bring you up to date, as well as our plan going forward. Show of hands, who knows what an Alpha Grimm is, and how Grimm Tides work?”

While the Huntsman all lifted their hands, the dusky-skinned Vacuoan one, Sunyi, kept glancing over to the covered crate Pyrrha had brought with them, the woman’s Fire-Manipulation Semblance likely pinging off of Jaune’s… *creations*, though in ways she didn’t understand. Of the guards, a few of the older ones lifted their arms as well, and a couple of the younger ones, but most didn’t, and one middle-aged man called out, “Why the hell do we need to know about that? We’re not *Huntsmen!* Why don’t you just do what we pay you for?”

*“Because,”* her leader smiled, the expression full of teeth that were a bit *too* sharp, though it was something that didn’t consciously register if you thought him a *Faunus*, “If we weren’t here you *all* would’ve been dead in a fortnight, when you were overwhelmed by a Grimm Tide the likes of which you’ve likely only read about, *if that*.”

Pyrrha’s polite smile became a *little* more fixed, as her Jaune was many things, but *tactful*, especially with those he did not already like, was *not* one of them.

“Should you be tellin’ us this?” one of the older guards questioned, the man greying at the temples.

The Dragon in Faunus form nodded. “You need to know to fight the opponent, and trust me, whatever extra draw your *fear* might create, it’s less than that of the Ancient Alpha that decided to *finally* wake up.”

Which was the story Port had directed them to go with, which was even true from a certain point of view. Grimm ‘ranked up’ as they aged, so all Behemoths were, technically, *Ancient Alphas.*

Eledeh, a huntress who was leaning against a metal broom, one with a wind-dust studded ‘brush’ she could use to fly, let out a sharp, *“Oh,* ***Fuck!****”* that also *didn’t help.*

The local’s exclamation caused the guards to become even *more* worried, as her Jaune, pitching his voice to cut through the fearful susurrus, continued, “***Which is why we’re here.*** For those of you who don’t know, the older Grimm get, the stronger, *and smarter*, they become. New Grimm, if you’ve ever seen the armor-less dumbasses, are about as intelligent as a box of rocks, but have the *survival instincts* of one as well, so they can mob civilians and green Hunters. After a few weeks their armor comes in and they become Standard Grimm. An unknown amount of time later, they get more armor and become *Advanced* Grimm, which is when their powers start to develop, either obvious ones, like an Imp’s scream or a Nevermore’s ability to shoot its feathers, or the subtler ones, like a Beowulf’s teamwork or an Ursa’s toughness.”

“Then they hit *Alpha*, and get the ability to command lesser Grimm of *every* species, becoming the leader of a hoard, or, as we know it, a *Grimm Tide,*” the Dragon continued. “And, again, the older they get, the *smarter* they get, until the assholes start using *tactics* better than ‘everyone run at the enemy at once and *hit them till they die*’. In short, *that* is what we’re dealing with.”

A female guard glanced fearfully at the forested hills, a couple miles away, and demanded, “Then what are we doing out *here?* Shouldn’t we be behind the walls!?”

But Jaune snorted, “If it came out *directly*, Port would kill it while we all took bets on how he’d do it.”

Ms. Celadon added, with a smirk, her worry hidden under a layer of false-confidence to reassure the others, “My money’s on decapitation. His head game’s on point.”

The non-sequitur broke the spiral of worry and despair that Pyrrha’s leader had accidentally been creating, as, while *he* wasn’t worried, no one but her realized *just* how capable he was to make that not braggadocio, but an accurate assessment of his capabilities.

“I, uh, okay,” the man in question stated, caught off guard by the double entendre, causing a few of the guards to laugh, a couple of them suddenly paling as they realized they were *laughing at a Huntsman.* However this *wasn’t* Mistral, and Jaune was so far removed from any sense of Face that the thought of being offended likely never crossed his mind.

Shaking his head, the incarnated Myth stated, “*Right.* Anyways, no, the issue is that we brought a forecast with us, and it will rain in two days, which, *speaking as a farm-boy*, if this harvest isn’t pulled in by then we *might* have some supply problems, as it looks like this Grimm has unfortunately figured out how to *siege*. Now, in a couple days, once we’ve got the appropriate defenses up, my team’s gonna go burn this little bitch out of its hole, but until *then* we need to get people out here, taking care of things, which means you and your men will be running overwatch.”

“But we couldn’t do that with *all* our Huntsmen,” Gregory, the Goat Faunus holding his sniper rifle, pointed out. “Some guards on cannons won’t be enough.”

Nodding, Jaune stated, “Yes, *you* couldn’t, but *we* can. And we’re bringing something… *extra* to the table.”

Sunyi pointed at the crate, visibly worried, “Is that it?”

“Yep!” the blond man grinned, glancing his partner’s way. “Pyrrha, a globe please?”

Smiling in return, the gladiatrix used her Semblance to grab hold of the metal pieces of the tarp, flipping it off to reveal racks filled with shining translucent spheres. With a bit more of her special ability, she took hold of the metal ring welding one globe shut and lifted it up, making it float over to him.

“So,” the Huntsman announced, taking hold of the glass container, which he’d forged from the beaches of his Domain using his Fire Dust aligned breath. It had started off black, before, coaxed with bit more prismatic Flame, the molten glass had turned so clear it has been near invisible. Finally, the molten substance had been poured into molds he’d hammered out of raw titanium with Aura-assisted strength in his partial form, and with her assistance using Semblance-controlled tools.

“*I* am a Dragon,” Jaune stated, not that they *truly* understood what that meant, “and *this* is my Fire.” Holding out his free hand, her partner breathed a plume of prismatic Flame into it, glowing the same rainbow colors, but with a *fraction* of the intensity.

He'd turned into his *full*-sized form to create the Fire in the jars, concentrating to pack it tighter and tighter until it was a small star of Flame. Then, *carefully*, he had put it into a the container, using a bit of Fire-enhance Flame to melt the iron until he could use a pair of claws to seal it. Lastly, one final blast of rainbow Flame went *into* the globe, *further* strengthening it.

Having them all shatter at once would be… *not good.*

Despite being an enormous beast of myth and legend, it’d been *everything* Pyrrha could do not to giggle as Jaune carefully worked, glowing eyes squinting in concentration, the ground occasionally shaking as he growled in frustration, trying to make it work.

He had just been *so adorable,* with his long tail waving back and forth, scaly lips pursed, that she’d had to excuse herself to have a moment of girlish glee, before returning to assist him.

And her lover had *really* enjoyed his little project as well, which, as he’d stated he was a Dragon of *Creation*, something he had *not* mentioned before, well… it made *sense*.

Jaune was always trying to build people *up*, both his team and Ruby’s, trying to *help*.

It put another layer of meaning to his issue with Yang, as he *couldn’t* help that girl.

She didn’t *want* to be helped, and that went against *everything he was.*

It also helped explain the iceberg temple to his teammates he’d created, one made *entirely of tempered Ice Dust,* which *still* sat off their beach, creating mist and a refreshing cool breeze that occasionally blew ashore.

*I should direct him to make more things,* Pyrrha thought, as Jaune continued talking, explaining how the globes would burn through Grimm, completely annihilating them, but also calling them.

“All *that* means that they’re the reason we can have people working the fields, as, if Grimm attack, not only will this *probably* destroy them outright, but it’ll buy the workers time to get to safety” he stated. “You’ll shoot them out of your cannons, and they *should* hold up, though we’re gonna want to test that, Rubes could probably just eyeball it, but it’s an easy-enough fix if they’re not up to snuff. Either way, *each* blast will not only take out a good chunk of Grimm, but it’ll call the survivors to it until they’ve thrown themselves on the Flames, committing suicide, until it’s *completely* smothered!” the Dragon grinned, even as the others stared at him in disbelief.

It was an emotion Pyrrha understood, if they judged him as a trainee Faunus Huntsman, when he was *anything* but.

*“And we have some volunteers!”* Port announced, pointing, and, yes, behind them, *stalking* out of the edge of the forest, was a collection of Grimm. Mostly Beowulfs, there were Ursa, Brucha, Creeps, and more.

There were easily a hundred Grimm, which would be easy work for Pyrrha and her teammates, as they currently were, but, looking at the assembled Guards and local Huntsmen and Huntresses, was enough to make *them* worry.

Her leader blinked, then shrugged. “Still need to do the cannon test, so I guess we’ll do it manually,” he announced, and Pyrrha prepared to use her Semblance to launch the sphere, only for Jaune to toss the globe upwards, and, as it descended, with a single sharp strike, *punched* the sphere.

Causing it to ***EXPLODE*** into Prismatic radiance.

The blast was directed upwards, and it was a *lot* more than Pyrrha thought it would be, the not-heat of his Flame almost oppressive, not on her skin, but on something *else entirely*, though not enough to register on her **Defenses**.

A fireball a good sixty feet wide ballooned upwards, before, suddenly, stopping, and, like time was reversing, re-condensed, moving to flow into Jaune’s now-open hand.

Forming a sphere, it then spread as more and more Flame was added, turning into a bar, then a spear, then-

*I’m sorry,* the gladiatrix thought, *is he making* ***Miló****?*

He *was,* down to the modeling, making a near-*perfect* recreation of her mechashifting sword/spear/rifle in its secondary configuration, concentrating to smooth out the details, having spent enough attention on her signature weapon to reproduce it *entirely* in a way that surprised her.

To care for her weapon as much as she did?

How *romantic!*

Then again, *that was Jaune*.

Getting it complete, down to her symbol on the blade, he looked over to her, and winked, and she felt herself *blush* a little, as the weapon started to glow even *brighter,* the Flames of its being likely fed directly by his internal reserves to increase their potency. Then, copying her form near-*exactly*, he *hurled* the spear, a tiny bit of released flame at the end letting it blast forward *just* as the rounds hidden in the shaft would normally.

While not as fast as she could make her weapon move *now,* he was clearly still controlling it as it flew, a *bit* like she could, the glowing armament crossing the miles in moments, finally slamming into an Ursa that was dead-center of the formation of Grimm.

Emphasis on *dead.*

There was a flash of rainbow light, as the as the construct came apart, the compressed blast rippling outwards in a loud ***Boom!*** that would’ve had Nora *and* Ruby almost indecently excited, the sound registering as the shockwave reached them several seconds later, blowing the grass back, but otherwise harmless

Jaune’s airborne Flames didn’t fade, but *dropped,* like incandescent rain, the main force of Grimm wiped out and the survivors, on the edges of the eighty-foot wide blast, howling in pain even as they tried to attack the Flames. They succeeding in reducing them, but only through paying for it with their dark flesh, the two substances direct opposites of each other.

And, taking a deep breath, Pyrrha smiled, taking a rare, pure inhalation, as the air around them all had been *completely* cleared of Grimm Taint, though those who had never visited the Dragon’s Domain would not realize it.

Turning back to face the others, who were openly staring, some with open mouths, the fire-controlling Huntress looking at the rack full of *dozens* of spheres with open fear, Jaune smiled, and gestured towards the currently self-terminating Grimm back near the treeline. “So, *yeah*, that’s what we’ll be using to make this work. Now, any questions? I want the farmers out here by noon *at the latest.*”

“What are they *feeding* you kids at Beacon?” Ms. Celadon demanded.

Smirking, Pyrrha smugly replied, “Smoothies.”

<DR>

The cannon test went off without a hitch, and soon Pyrrha was with the rest of her team meeting the rest of the guard force, which was *mostly* going well.

*Mostly.*

“I’m sorry, is there a problem?” Jaune questioned mildly, interrupting the briefing, walking over to a pair of guards, a man and woman, who were giving Yang and Blake *very* dirty looks.

“What?” the man, the older of two, questioned, surprised, as the briefing came to a screeching halt, not that the gladiatrix’s partner noticed, nor cared.

Smiling, the Dragon asked, “Well, I can’t help but notice the *enmity* you seem to be showing for my teammates. So, again, I ask *is there a problem?*”

His other two teammates were watching the interaction, apprehension causing the Faunus’ now uncovered ears to twitch, while dread was clear on the blonde’s face. If Pyrrha had to guess, something had happened while the two were out and about, that had led to the brawler’s extension of an olive branch. The silly girl had lost less than she’d thought, although still more than she realized. Jaune would still be her team leader, because that was who he was, but he had *not* forgiven her, as time would not heal *that* wound.

Though, with Pyrrha’s help, it would not *fester* either.

The Dragon had told the Berserker *exactly* how he worked, but the gladiatrix had sadly found out for herself that most did not believe what they were told.

Even when it was the truth.

*Especially* when it was the truth.

“They were causing a disturbance yesterday,” the man grumbled. “Then they threatened us.”

Yang moved to argue, but Pyrrha sharply held up her hand, motioning for the girl to stay quiet, as, again, she did *love* to watch her man work.

“A *disturbance* you say,” Jaune questioned, almost mockingly, taking a step back, and looking at the man pensively. “How many were injured?”

The guard frowned, “Well, no one was injure-”

“Oh, *I’m sorry,*” the Dragon interrupted. “How many citizens were accosted? And *why?*”

The guard frowned, annoyed, “Well, no one was-”

“So you’re saying that no one was hurt, and they didn’t so much have a confrontation with anyone *other* than yourself, but that *still* somehow led to them ‘threatening you’?” the blond inquired.

“City’s under threat, and *they* were causing a disturbance,” the female officer stated, pointing. “What if they pulled in more Grimm?”

Jaune stared for a moment, with a momentary stillness that made Pyrrha a *little* worried, but more for the fallout than for any danger *he* might be in.

“Oh, so *them* doing something that neither hurt nor *directly* is bad, because of ‘negative emotions’, but *you* clearly harboring them towards my teammates is *perfectly fine,*” the incarnated Myth remarked flatly. “Fucking cops are the same *everywhere*. Rules for *me*, but not for *thee*.”

Sparing a glance towards the local Huntsman, and clearly thinking they would protect her, the female guard spat, “Of course *you’d* protect them. You *animals* are all the same.”

And now it was *Blake* who Pyrrha had to catch the eye of, and dissuade from interfering, though the guard’s belief that the Gabbro Huntsmen would protect her, given that one was a Faunus himself, may have been in error.

The gladiatrix’s partner just stared at the woman, unblinking, with the air of mild amusement, which unsettled the policewoman enough for the idiotic woman’s partner to interject, distracting the blonde and dragging Jaune’s attention back on himself as the foolish local demanded, *“Well?”*

With a long sigh, containing prismatic sparks that caused both guards to flinch, and several others to reach for their weapons, Jaune stated, “Listen, *Dumbass*, do you mind if I call you Dumbass?”

The male guard glared, “My name’s-”

“***Dumbass***, like I just said,” the Dragon stated, and something about him… shifted, in a way that passed *right* by Pyrrha, but made the two he was talking to pale, as well as *every other guard that’d reached for his or her weapon within thirty feet*. “You accosted armed Huntresses for the ‘crime’, and I use that term loosely, of *possibly* attracting the very Grimm it’s their job to kill, and then they ‘threatened’ you, while I’m *sure* you did *nothing* to provoke such a ***violent reaction,***” he commented voice nearly *dripping* with condescension, “yet remained unharmed.”

“Then, showing *none* of the intelligence that you *hairless apes* are known for, you decided to *nurse* that grudge upon finding out that, in the hierarchy of survival, *you don’t actually matter that much*, then, finding out they were part of the ***Elite Team*** sent here to *save* your *pathetic* hides, you decided to indulge it, foster it, and were in the process of turning it into something *dangerous,*” he continued. “Now, if I were a *lesser* being, with you presenting a *possible threat* to my teammates, I would have you *imprisoned* until hostilities are over, or, if the others refused to do so, *kill you myself.*”

Smiling, showing a mouth full of fangs, he continued, tilting his head Professor Port’s way, then Pyrrha’s, “And there’s *possibly* two people that could stop me, but not before I *remove you both from this Mortal Coil first.* So here is what’s going to happen, *Dumbass*, and the same goes for you, *Moron,*” he stated looking at the female guard, who, from the dark stain running down her legs, *had* lost control over her bladder as soon as he’d addressed her directly.

Glancing down momentarily, with a minute shake of his head in disgust, the Pyrrha’s lover continued, “You are both going to *apologize* to the *superhuman warriors* that are *your better* in *pretty much every way,* and quite possibly ***every*** way. Then you are going to clean yourselves up. And *then* you are going to be assigned to the Quadrant *they* will be working to see *exactly who you were threatening*. And, finally, you will understand *your chosen place in the pecking order.*”

Holding up a finger, a few errant prismatic sparks collecting into a small fireball, he added, “Oh, and, as I am a *Dragon*, not an *‘animal’,* know that if, due to your action or inaction, you allow harm to come to them, I will burn you to death, *and then eat you.* Now, am I clear?”

The two guards just stared at him in stark terror.

Smiling, bits of Flame escaping from between his teeth, Jaune repeated, *“****Am. I. Clear?****”*

Both locals shakily nodded.

*“****Good,****”* the Dragon growled, making a flicking motion to dismiss them, both of them stumbling away to a shocked looking pair of Huntresses, who accepted their apologies, though Blake’s nose did screw up at the smell.

Looking around at the circle of terrified people around him, Jaune was confused, before a look of understanding crossed his features. “Be not afraid,” he commanded, which, oddly, seemed to *help,* the radius of… *whatever* he was doing abating*.* “We’re all in this together. Now, Commander Buchanon, you were saying?”

The Aura’d man in charge of the guards, and one who had been at the *edge* of the effect, nodded, more put together than the others. “Er, *yes*, as I was saying, the area will be broken up into five quadrants. We will be holding the line while the Huntsman Contingents will go forth, *into the tide,* to handle the others. Quadrant one’s team will be Peter Port. Just Peter Port. Two will be Jaune Arc. Three will be Pyrrha Nikos, yes, the Invincible Girl. Four will be Yang Xiao-Long and Blake Belladonna. And five will be, er, *all the other Huntsmen.* That is… correct?” he questioned, looking to Ms. Celadon, who, in turn, looked to Professor Port.

“Yes, that sounds like a *fair distribution!”* the large man grinned. “Isn’t that right, Mr. Arc?”

Looking towards the elderly Faunus, Jaune asked the Huntress in charge of Gappro, “We can do *four* quadrants, if you want to keep your people on the wall.”

Ms. Celadon looked at the kid in disbelief, then again to Port, who just nodded, wearing a wide smile. “Don’t… Don’t worry kid. We got that much,” she reassured, realizing the blond man was being *serious*.

“You’d know their capabilities,” he nodded, respecting her decision, gesturing for the Commander to continue. It was clear to Pyrrha that he had not realized that he was, innately, putting himself at a *peer* level with everyone else, if not above them.

Then again, he *was* a Dragon, so perhaps that was warranted.

The Commander finished his speech, and started managing his men, as the red-headed Huntress sidled up next to her partner, asking, “Jaune, what was it that you did, when you spoke to those two?”

“*Dragonfear*,” he responded easily, though quietly. “Another aspect of… what I am. Comes with being an Apex Predator,” the shapeshifted being from Legend shrugged. “But it’s only something my *foes* need to deal with. Didn’t realize I had it until, well, *now,* and a strong enough will can ignore it.”

The Gladiatrix filed that away, having dealt with Fear Semblances before, trying not to smile as she added *another* power her lover had to the growing list, asking, “Are you alright?” At his confused look, she added, “You were… a little *vicious*, though I would say deservedly so.”

The Myth in the shape of a man winced. “Spent too long, uh, *like that,*” he stated. “Making the spheres was needed, but, well, *you know.*”

Pyrrha nodded, her lover having mentioned the *mental* effects of becoming his *true* self, and how they… *lingered*. “But what was it that provoked you, if you don’t mind…”

“Well, I don’t like bullies, *or Oathbreakers,* so corrupt cops will always earn my ire,” he stated, a little over-formally, another sign of his enduring instinctual influences. “And I *do not* like it when someone threatens what is ***Mine,***” he growled, softly, but several still glanced his way, worried.

“Even Yang?” the gladiatrix questioned, despite herself, smiling, and putting those around them at ease.

The Dragon paused, then shrugged, “For degrees of Mine. And, if they thought to take it out on them in the middle of battle… *Always* kill Traitors before Enemies!” he pronounced quietly, but forcefully, then frowned. “I… don’t know *why*, but…”

“It *is* a good policy, Jaune,” Pyrrha agreed, distracting him from his worries about knowledge he *didn’t remember learning*, the topic rare, but worrying enough for the man to drive himself to distraction if left alone, earning an interested look from her partner. “Too many Heroes have their stories cut short, stabbed in the back by those they trusted, were betrayed by, then forgave without cause. Even the strongest fighter can still be felled by an unexpected attack when they thought themselves safe.”

“R-right,” he nodded, still dwelling on it, but shaking his head and moving on, just as she wished. “Either way. They *are* my teammates, and their safety is my responsibility.”

“And it’s one you attend to well, though we can *mostly* look after ourselves,” the gladiatrix smiling, getting a laugh and a nod from her partner, who understood what she meant.

*Definitely need to keep track of him, when we visit Mistral,* the red-headed fighter noted to herself, as, when some noble ‘Young Master’ accused the Dragon of ‘Courting Death’, the Mythological Entity would see fit to *introduce the speaker to it himself.* Though, keeping to the Huntsman Academy to visit Artorias and the others, and *away* from the Aristocracy, they should avoid that *particular* brand of idiocy.

That said, the gladiatrix *did* enjoy watching her man work, and there were a few… irritating individuals that she wouldn’t object to him crossing paths with, once he no longer hid what he was, and could get away with frying a few fools.

Either way, while *Jaune* missed it, Pyrrha had caught how their leader’s stepping up in their defense had affected both girls, who were, even now, sneaking appreciative, and intrigued, peeks his way.

*Oh, yes, I can work with this.*

<DR>

It took most of both days, but, waiting with the others, Pyrrha breathed a bit easier as the last of the farmers rushed inside the walls with their harvest, others in the town taking over the transfer and moving the entire thing *much* faster than it would have normally. Jaune had taken the time to dip back into his Domain and now, around the outside of the city, were a ring of glass chests, that, when broken, would surround the entire city of Gabbro with *even more rainbow Flame*, their location an *overwhelming* beacon to the Grim, all but daring for them to start a Grimm Tide.

But they… had not obliged.

Oh, there’d been *some* attacks at first, but the Flame Globes had done their jobs, and some of the Grimm Attackers in places *not yet fired upon* had pulled back, something that caused Professor Port to frown, and comment with a frown, “*Hmmm.*”

Several more probing attacks had been attempted, all of them pulling back, repelled before combat could truly been joined.

And then they had stopped *entirely* on the second day.

While the mounting tension of *something* happening had increased, now they would not do so with civilians on the battlefield. However, they *would* need to sleep lightly, in case-

*“Contact, Quadrant One!”* an observer reported, broadcast through their scrolls, more voices chiming in, adding, *“Contact, Quadrant Two/Three/Four/Five!”*

Pyrrha and the others were quickly moving, before the calls finished, out of the ready room and to the top of the tower they’d stationed themselves in, one that let them overlook the entire city, where they could be launched, in a manner similar to their initial examination at Beacon, and be at *any* wall in seconds.

And they collectively paused, as the Grimm were on the march.

*Literally*.

Row after row of Grimm slowly emerged from the forest, moving in perfect sync, squares of them gathered into discrete formations based on species, coming from *every* direction and converging on their location with military precision, all without a single Alpha in sight, let alone the Behemoth.

Worse than that, though, was Professor Port’s response. The bombastic man was quiet, and sounded worried in a way that Pyrrha had *never* heard before, as he stared at the slowly approaching threat with wide eyes.

“Ah, well, that is… *different.*”