

**A brief note guys. I haven't seen anything beyond RWBY Season 2. If what I say about the geography of Mistral is off... well... I don't care. Harsh, but true. RWBY became so horribly predictable and just plain horrid after season 2 it isn't even funny.**

This has now been edited by Hiryo and morte24. Thank them both for their hard work please

### **Semblance of Hope Episode 1: Chapter 19, Part 1: Entrances and Escapes**

As the cargo ship drew closer to the docks, the crowd quickly became apparent, and it was every bit as large and noisy as Ranma and the others had begun to suspect after seeing the ships that had come out with people aboard to greet Pyrrha. It was so bad that no work was getting done throughout the sprawling docks, not in the more businesslike area, where the ship was heading or the private area for smaller ships around the sides. Staring at the crowd, Ranma likened it to a few crowds he'd seen back in his old world in Japan when an idol group would be seen moving around the city or something.

Ren was shocked, while Nora was just staring, looking at the crowd, then up and beyond them at the city beyond. "Hmm... I might need a bit of juice for this one."

"Do it. And they even created banners," Jaune mumbled even as he replied to Nora, staring at several large banners whose writing he could make out even from here. Many of those banners were simple, we love you Pyrrha, welcome back, that kind of thing. Others though...

Seeing one such fluttering in the breeze, Nora laughed, bouncing up and down as she pointed to it. "Look at that one! Someone hasn't gotten the memo about international cooperation, have they?"

The banner in question read out 'Vale can go die, they weren't worthy of our Goddess!' Others in the crowd were more disturbing in a personal rather than a political sense. 'I love you, Pyrrha,' signs, and 'All hail our Virgin Goddess, who belongs to us all equally!' One of them even mentioned the fact she had apparently been beaten by Ranma in a spar. 'Still Invincible in our hearts, only trickery could ever have taken down our Goddess of Victory! All hail Pyrrha!'

"Yeesh. Are gladiators really that popular here?" Reading those signs, Ranma's earlier assumption of Pyrrha's near-idol status was being changed to super-idol status in his mind. *And damn me, but some of those signs freak me the heck out! 'Belong to us all equally', what the heck is that supposed to mean?!*

Pyrrha shrugged her shoulders, now letting her face shift to show how uncomfortable she was with all of this that none of her public was close enough to see. The smaller ships had long since broken away for their own docks, thanks to the first part of Ranma's plan, the bit of smoke that was slowly billowing from the back of the ship, which was why there was a group of emergency vehicles to one side of the crowd. "Well, yes. Before I was around, there was a middle-aged man named Agamemnon who had won the tournament twice in a row. He was lauded as the Old Warrior, the General and so forth and I remember seeing news images of crowds for him much like these. So you can imagine how popular I became after winning the tournament four times."

Ranma shook his head. "I never got into the whole idol thing, and I really think this is kind of, well, dangerous." When everyone else looked at him. Ranma shrugged. "How would all those people react if anything happened to Pyrrha? The despair and sorrow would act like a beacon that the Grimm just couldn't ignore, regardless of any natural defenses the area might have."

Pyrrha winced at that, but this was a thought that she had had before. She just didn't know how to combat an entire culture that sanctified the idea of champions and the gladiatorial contests that birthed them. But then Ranma went on.

"I also prefer to see more people training rather than following, if you understand what I mean. How many of those people would be willing to try and save themselves rather than wait for the mighty Pyrrha to save them? Ugh." Frankly it always astonished Ranma how few people in this world understood how to fight at all, let alone had their Aura activated. *Back home, being peaceful, normal, etc. was fine. Here, when there was a ravaging threats to all of human existence right outside your cities? Not so much.*

"And of course, I also see it from Pyrrha's perspective. How much you want to bet that a lot of that crowd would be willing to, oh, I don't know, try to take pictures of her everyday life? Especially looking for anything they could use to gain popularity among her followers?" He smirked at Pyrrha. "Like what happened when you and I met."

"The paparazzi are a major problem, and one reason why I was so grateful to be accepted into Beacon Academy," Pyrrha admitted, although she refused to be drawn on the rest of Ranma's statement.

"Well, regardless, we don't need to deal with this crowd." Ranma squeezing her hand, then back to the contraption he had built, then the distance to the rest of the city out past the port, before nodding. "Nora, you're up."

The hammer wielder gleefully saluted, then raced down into the ship. Soon, more black smog began to rise from the main cargo hatch, and several rents in the ship's sides and deck, not just at the back of the ship, and worse, this was far darker smoke than before. To the laymen, like the crowd waiting for them, this meant it signified a worse problem.

The crew on deck were all looking rather annoyed. But Ranma had asked their captain for his help in getting away from the crowds and seeing how he had feared Pyrrha's fans might storm his ship if Pyrrha was a little too slow getting off it, he had agreed. Seeing how the guards on the docks were a scattered few, the captain knew he'd made the right decision.

Oh, crap, there really is something wrong with the ship!" shouted someone in the crowd, and they began to back away from the dockyard, shifting this way and that to allow emergency responders to rush forward. Both firetrucks and ambulances, had been waiting nearby just in case, not taking part in the crowds cheering although many had wanted to.

Then as the ship slowed to a crawl against the dock, and dropped anchor, the smoke bloomed outward, Nora rejoined her team. "Ready for part two of the operation, fearless leaders!"

"Well done, Sergeant Nora! And as for the phase two, I volunteer to go first." Jaune saluted mockingly, stepping forward, as much as he could towards Nora's voice. Visibility was kind of bad right now, after all. "For those who are about to die, we salute you!"

Hearing that, Pyrrha nearly broke down into wild giggles, knowing that that was an old gladiatorial salute to the crowd. It had fallen out of favor with the discovery of Aura. Then she did giggle as, the next second, Nora, who on Jaune's command on several battery's worth of electricity, lifted her hammer. "And smash!!!"

With Jaune balancing on the top, she whirled around, and as Jaune leaped into the air, putting his shield under his feet, the hammer smashed into the bottom of the shield, hurling the Arc boy up and away, bursting out of the smoke. A smoke, furthermore, that was started to turn pink, halting the first responders in confusion.

Seconds later, Jaune was in midair, using his shield almost like a surfboard, as he flew through the air in a very non-aerodynamic fashion. "No, no, oh god, this is going to hurt!" But contrary to his fears, Nora's initial attack had hurled him far enough to put the crowd well behind him. Soon Jaune crashed onto a rooftop, skidding along it on his shield. "Thank you, Two Brothers, for Aura!"

With that Jaune fell to one side rolling along the rooftop to crash back first into a balustrade there. The stone cracked a bit, but thanks to his immense Aura reserves, Jaune was unharmed. His shield skidding ahead of his initial destination to similarly crash into another wall of the balustrade where it embedded itself in the edge of the rooftop across. Shaking his head groggily, Jaune moved over to it, trying to pull it out only to fail, the shield's edge having wedged too far into the stone. "Note to self, never let Ranma plan anything non-combat related. Freaking pigtailed psycho."

Back on the ship, Pyrrha was next. Still giggling madly, Pyrrha tied her shield to her boots, then looked at Ranma then Nora, shaking her head, still giggling hopelessly. "You know this is crazy, right?"

*"Ya got Aura, what's the harm?" Ranma quipped, winking at his girlfriend. Heh, girlfriend. Damn, but that's nice to think. No fiancé/fiancée thing, no honor obligations, just affection and oh yeah, attraction. Heh. Lots of that.*

The redheaded girl was still giggling as she hopped into the air, signaling Nora to launch her. Which Nora did, with another delighted battle cry of, "And smash!!"

Out in the crowd, several people were still looking up, Jaune's dopplering voice and flight having grabbed their attention. Now they saw Pyrrha flying by as if shot out of a cannon, along with the accompanying clap of thunder. "Huh, I always knew our angel could fly," one of them muttered.

The rest were just shouting out various offshoots of, "Is that the Invincible Girl up there, what in the...!" Not nearly as interesting, but somewhat more sane, perhaps.

The sound of Pyrrha's shout of, "I'm sorry!" echoed back to them, while, Pyrrha got her feet under her, skimming through the air. Her balance was up to this task unlike Jaune's and as such, she was able to ride it farther than he was, although Pyrrha didn't realize this at first.

Soon Pyrrha saw a set of antennae and poles in the distance deeper into the town and further up the inner face of the caldera, Pyrrha reached out towards them with her Polarity power, one hand outstretched. The other was at her side, using the same power to keep her shield under her feet.

A few moments later she landed, hopping daintily off her shield, reaching down and scooping it up to her back before she stared around her in consternation. Whatever else could be said for Nora, she wasn't very good at aiming. Pyrrha couldn't see any sign of Jaune out there, which was an annoyance. He was her partner, after all. Then she saw a glint of something, and finally spotted Jaune holding his sword in the air. She waved, and the sword signaled back, and Pyrrha had a moment to make a note of the direction before there was a third booming sound from the port, barely heard from this far away.

As he took his turn to be shot out from the Nora Cannon (patent pending), Ren would surely have agreed with Jaune as, not for the first time, he felt himself being launched through the air by Nora's hammer. "All trajectory and distance, bang on!" Nora howled in delight.

Ren was unused to using a shield, even though Ranma had given Ren his. But unlike Jaune, he didn't panic once in the air, instead following Ranma's instructions on how to control himself in midair. He first kept his arms close to his body, and the borrowed shield facing downward, skimming through the air until he felt the initial impetus start to peter out. Then he

reached down and flipped himself, grasping onto the shield by the straps with both hands. Then he flipped it onto his back, whereupon Ren started to thrust out his arms and legs, then rolled through the air then again, thrusting out his limbs.

And as planned, Pyrrha was able to follow his trajectory and reached for him. Grabbing at the metal of the shield and Lotus flower, Pyrrha was able to drag Ren sideways pulling him down and towards the right. From this angle Pyrrha's power wasn't strong enough to pull Ren all the way to her, but she could put him down near Jaune. "That is good enough I suppose," she muttered, sticking out her tongue in concentration, sweat beading down her brow. At that point, she smiled. *Hmm, long distance, large-scale control, yes, I think I just found another means of training my power! How to go about it thought will be tough. Still, as Ranma says, anything can be training.*

Back on the ship, Nora had shrunk Magnhild to its smallest form and was now clasping her beloved to her chest as she moved into a makeshift sling that Ranma had created. "This is going to be awesome! The only thing better than flying would be to land in a pancake store! Oooh, can you aim this thing?"

Shaking away a feeling of pride and comradeship towards Pyrrha that had just passed over him, Ranma chuckled, as he pulled the contraption back. Only someone with his strength would've been able to do this, the thing was rickety, raggedy, made of rope wire and several large bits of tortured metal, more resembling a catapult than a sling, whatever Nora called it. The neck portion was bent backward, the metal not being twisted into its new shape, just bent, another thing that few could have judged. "Heh, you wish, I don't know this town well enough to know where one of those are, ya pancake addict. Ready?"

"For what I am about to do I am truly thankful!" Nora shouted back, and Ranma let go.

The catapult, the metal band groaning under Ranma's strength, flicked forward hurling Pyrrha through the air just as the last of the pink smoke finally dissipated. For a moment it looked for all the world like someone had set up a catapult on the ship and was about to attack a castle with a Nora rather than a rock. Her shout of, "Woohoo!" halted any such thoughts.

Midair, Pyrrha flipped herself upward, Magnhild coming up off her chest and changing to its polearm version, allowing Nora to stand on its head where it met the shaft. Once her feet were firmly on the metal, Nora fired her grenade launcher several times more, sailing through the air under her own power towards where she could see Ren waving his hands at her. She could also see Pyrrha, and Nora waved back to Ren, before changing her trajectory towards Pyrrha. *After all, Ren's got Jauney with him, so the P and N need to get together too!*

Seconds later Nora could feel the moment when Pyrrha began to use her magnetic powers to help her dissent, and soon the hammer rider landed next to the other girl, slowing her dissent with another smash of her hammer, then landing on her feet, grinning at the smiling Pyrrha. "Let's do that again!"

Just then, Pyrrha's scroll went off and she sighed. "Of course, I should have known someone would try to call and ruin our fun."

"Ooh pool!" Nora pouted, before checking her own scroll. "It's only yours though."

"Ugh. That means it might be my parents. I think I'd rather talk to the council," Pyrrha grumbled, only to curse those words a moment later as the images of the Mistral Council appeared on her Scroll's screen.

The men on the other end immediately began to remonstrate with her for leaving the port in such a manner. In their eyes, it was a perfect PR opportunity, which was, though they didn't come out and state it, was part of why they had wanted Pyrrha – and her team, of course, to come to Mistral in the first place.

Pyrrha however, had been couched on this point by Ranma on the days after they had officially gotten together. Ranma was fine with Pyrrha keeping her public persona going, playing to the crowds and whatnot but he was in no way willing to let Pyrrha keep being a pushover for the powers that be. So after a few moments, Pyrrha broke into their harangue in a manner most unlike the Pyrrha Nikos they thought they knew. "Counselors, I became a huntress to fight Grimm, not be some kind of poster girl for the gladiatorial arenas! If you're not going to talk about my report to you on how fraught the journey here was, we are done here."

All four of team JNPR and Ranma had sent in reports about what they had run into the moment their scrolls were within range of the CCT. Ranma's had been the most thorough, but since they were acting as if they were full-fledged Hunters on this mission, JNPR had been forced to write their own.

For a moment that brought stunned silence to the group chat, but one of the counselors at least had enough presence to realize that Pyrrha was in no mood to deal with them right now. And he also knew that the report was indeed important, more important than Pyrrha messing up a fantastic PR moment. *After all, it was a fantastic PR moment not just because she's coming home but because of what occurred on their trip.*

"I suppose you are right Ms. Nikos. For now, explain to us the moment right before the Grimm attacked. There was no upswelling of sorrow, anger, fear or any other..." he paused fumbling for words. "I, it just, Grimm don't act like that! To swarm like that, they have to be provoked, be incited by negative emotions. But your report says nothing on that score."

"Because there was nothing on that score to report," Pyrrha shrugged. "You're free to call my teammates and even talk to Ranma himself. We all agreed Councilors: that there was no sudden shift of the emotions aboard the ship, no sudden fear or horror before the Grimm began their attack. Indeed, there was hardly any warning at all."

“Perhaps some local upsurge in their numbers pushed them to the surface?” a second councilor spoke up, while their fellows took a bit longer to get over their huff at Pyrrha’s outspoken refusal to dance to their tune any longer.

Pyrrha shrugged ignorance at that, then went into detail about the types of Grimm that they had seen. They had covered that in the reports, of course, but she wished to emphasize these points before the councilors could try to push it to one side.

The news of the two S-class Grimm made the councilor’s shades visibly flinch, an idea made worse by the fact they had seemingly been working together. That was bad, especially considering the type of S-class Grimm involved. Even within that grade, there was a wide variety in type and ability, and the Leviathan was almost as dangerous as the Dragons, a type of Grimm that when seen, spelled the doom of nations.

Yet the councilors refused to come to the same conclusion that Ranma had shared with team JNPR: that they had been targeted by the Grimm specifically. That was a worrisome thought on many levels and one the council-people refused to contemplate. They kept on going on about how perhaps the children on the ship had been full of fear for some reason or something like that, some more blasé reasoning behind the attack. Something had to attract the Grimm. Any other conclusion was unthinkable.

For Pyrrha it was almost amusing to watch. *Ugh. And these people are supposed to my nation’s leaders? I suppose they must have some redeeming qualities, but courage to face the truth isn’t one of them. It’s sort of what like watching an ostrich slowly stick his head into the ground, thinking thoughts of, ‘I’m not here you can’t see me!’*

She was broken out of her rather amusing thoughts of the councilors secretly being ostriches by one of them saying, “It is a shame that your weapon, was demolished, although for the head of an S-Class Grimm it was a small price to pay. Still, we’ll introduce you to several experts’ smiths, you can choose among them. Indeed, we can make a production of it.”

“An excellent thought. After all, while her team is here for the mission... upriver... there’s no reason we can’t make some public hay from it right away,” another counselor enthused, making certain not to actually speak about the mission in question over the scroll for some reason. Nora made a note of it, thinking maybe this mission might actually be important if possible. “We’ll send you a list of times and dates Ms. Nikos, public appearances and such like, as well as the addresses of several of the blacksmiths that can make your new weapons for you.”

Pyrrha's teeth ground together, but despite Ranma’s training she still felt the instinctual response of malleable obedience bubbling to her surface, a lifetime’s training of doing what she was told and following along coming to the fore, her new spine having been overused during this conversation. But before Pyrrha could speak, Nora pushed her face into the pickup of the scroll. “Sorry! But we’re not going to be doing any of that kind of thing. We’re huntresses,

remember! We've got a job to do. And right now, our job is to fill our bellies with some good food that isn't fish! See you."

Before any of the counselors could say anything, Nora had closed Pyrrha's scroll, and then very deliberately went into the controls and turned off its ability to receive calls before putting it in her own bag, a slim thing that was always on her back. "You're not getting that back," she said firmly as Pyrrha opened her mouth to remonstrate with Nora for her rudeness.

The redhead then closed her mouth, and then smiled shyly. "Thank you. I'm sorry I'm not quite as good as I hoped about, well, standing up for myself."

"Not a problem," Nora laughed. "You come to Jaune, me or Ranma when you need someone to be rude. We'll do it with smiles on our faces. Honestly, have any of those people ever actually met you? To think you'd be happy to go to some super-popular, super-expensive, super-self-important smithy rather than your Aunt's!"

"Er, some of them have met me once or twice, at parties my parents started to hold after I became famous. Still, you're right. They want to turn my weapons into just another advertisement. Still, it's not the first time they've tried that. They will get over it eventually." Pyrrha looked around, then gesture up towards the next layer of the city. "Let's put some more distance between us and the port though. The further away from it we are the..."

"Nope I don't think so," Nora shook her head as she interrupted Pyrrha, pointing at a small pouch at Pyrrha's side as she held up a large bottle of water. "Come on, you're just putting it off."

Pyrrha scowled but opened the pouch. Inside, was a small clear container holding a kind of thick, heavy goop. Ranma had given it to her, saying it would change her hair color to brown for several hours. "It's so bad! He said the smell would go away when we mix it with water, but still... do I have to?" she almost whined. Pyrrha really wasn't vain about anything beyond her combat prowess most of the time. But Pyrrha did like her red hair like any woman and took scrupulous care of it. Not to the extent of Yang of course, she was rather extreme about it. But to put junk in your hair would take well a boy's attitude towards haircare.

"Yes you do, if you want to go around without being swamped. Now come on, let's get it over with," she said, grabbing the flask out of Pyrrha's hand. She peered over the side of the street, noting that they were in a back alley somewhere and grinned. "We don't even need a sink."

Shuddering, Pyrrha put her head down against the stone of the rooftop's balustrade. "Just do it."



“Come on, the faster we do this, the faster we get to meet up with the boys. And then we’ll buy so much chocolate that if we ate it all at once we’d turn into blimps and then find some good food like I said. You wouldn’t want to make me into a liar now, would you?”

Pyrrha was still laughing as Nora finished mixing the brown goop that Ranma had created once mixing water with the paste that Ranma had given them. Elsewhere, Jaune and Ren were doing the same thing that Pyrrha and Nora were. Except their case, it was different clothing and hats donated by the crew minus the hair products. “After all, with Nora and Pyrrha around, who would even bother looking at us?” Jaune muttered as he pulled on a jacket.

“True enough. I am wondering though why the crew was so able to help Ranma with that hair gel he made. Or had the contacts on hand for us,” Ren murmured, leaning back and wincing as he put a contact into one of his eyes.”

“...You have a point. Methinks our good captain isn’t altogether new at helping people hide out, if not often from literal mobs.” Jaune shook his head, his own blue eyes having been covered over by brown. “Now, what was the name of that place they want us to meet at?”

“Chocolate heaven,” Ren replied, shaking his head slightly, then smiling at the word through newly made jade eyes. “I think Pyrrha’s obsession is showing.”

Jaune laughed, and with Ren in the lead they made their way over a few more rooftops before scaling down a fire escape into an alleyway. From there the two of them moved on, occasionally asking for directions as they made their way to the predetermined gathering point.

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For his part, Ranma had escaped the crowd just as easily as everyone else. Since dealing with the crowd here, like the one back in Vale when he and team RWBY boarded the train, wasn't part of his job description, he was not required to stay and hobnob. So Ranma simply leaped off the back of the ship, entering the water as easily as a dolphin, and swam away. He put several wharfs between him and the edge of the crowd before coming out of the water, then pulled himself up out of the water via the legs of the crane stuck on the edge of one of the other wharfs.

“Ugh, okay, next time I try to sneak out as part of the crew. Double ugh! I ain’t exactly an environmentalist, but damn people, stop dumping your shit in the water and just hope it will magically go away!” Ranma grumbled.

Scowling and wringing out his hair, Ranma hid behind a bit of the crane, staring around for a moment, his eyes narrowed. It looked like they had all gotten away clean but better safe than sorry. A second later, a quick application of ki, and he was dry again, then moving on. *I’ll change into my new outfit soon, but first, I want to get some distance from the docks.* But as Ranma moved off, he frowned, stopping and hiding himself once more for a few seconds as

something twigged his sixth sense. Someone was looking for him and with murderous intent. *What the...*

After a few moments though, the feeling went away without Ranma being able to spot whoever it was, and he scowled angrily. *Fine, time to disappear for a bit. But I wonder what caused that? White Fang, or that someone working with the Grimm that Ozzy hinted at. Damn now I wish I had chanced coming up closer to the crowd.*

Scowling, but with nothing to go on, Ranma raced off, taking to the warehouse rooftops and away over them as fast as possible, before dropping down out of sight entirely.

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In a small roof-side café, Hazel scowled in anger. “Damn, I lost him. You see why I wished to afford myself of your services Lil’ Miss Malachite?” At first he had been kind of amused their mode of travel, and hope they'd hit something but even so, losing them was unacceptable. *And oh, is my partner going to be insufferable for losing our quarry so easily. I wonder why the Warden looked around like that though? Could he have spotted Tyrian somehow?*

“Indeed I do,” the older woman murmured, pulling away her very ladylike binoculars, setting them aside. “So long as it is only observation, and...” Lil’ Miss Malachite tittered, “Finding him first. My word, ya would think he knows someone’s after him. Or just prefers to blend in. My price will go up, you know, depending on how well they can do so.”

“Good help is always expensive,” Hazel replied promptly, gaining a nod from the old woman. The massive man then stood up, his movements fast and controlled for all his size. *Find Tyrian first, then... then I think I want to meet with the Cowardly Lion before moving on.* “Now, if you excuse me, I think I need to go and corral my partner before he starts taking his anger out on random passerby. You know how to reach me, and I assume what I’ve already paid you will still work as a down-payment?”

Malachite nodded and watched as he left. One of her men moved to stand in front of her and she smiled blandly. “I think we can do business with the Mistah Hazel but keep an eye on him. If he thinks his partna is a loose cannon, that might mean trouble for us down the line. And you know how I don’t like trouble.”

Indeed, near the port where the crowd had gathered, and was now slowly dissipating now that it was obvious Pyrrha had left, Tyrian was throttling back his killing rage with difficulty. *The mistress will be angry with me! I'm going to kill them all! Kill them! And the warden, Ranma he goes first!*

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Unaware of the exact nature of their local opposition, Ranma had changed into jeans and a decent long-sleeved shirt made in the local fashion of being body hugging except for loose sleeves and a loose neckline. *Heh, Mousse would have loved shirts like these,* He reflected as he moved through the streets, looking for team JNPR. Say what you would about their outfits, Nora's attitude and Jaune and Pyrrha's height would be easy to pick out if you were looking for them. *And what was the name of that confectionary place? Something heaven?*

Moving around a corner of a pedestrian only street – like the majority in this area of the port, he spotted the four of them, all in their own disguises, chatting excitedly as Nora and Pyrrha hefted several bags of chocolate that they had just bought from Chocolate Heaven.

Shaking his head, he wound an arm around Pyrrha's waist, causing her to gasp, then smile in delight. Ranma's touch was distinctive somehow. There was so much strength in his body, coupled with an astonishing amount of gentleness, that it marked him out from anyone else. She nuzzled into his side, a wide beaming smile on her face as Ranma spoke. "I don't suppose any of that chocolate is for me? Otherwise, I might have to force you to work off those empty calories before +much longer."

"We'll share, we'll share," came from JNR.

Pyrrha didn't join in, too busy leaning into his side and sighing contentedly. *Wasn't this one of the things on my bucket list? Walking around Mistral arm in arm with my boyfriend, with no one bothering us? Check!*

Ranma smiled back at her, kissing Pyrrha on the forehead, but Nora's stomach interrupted them at that point. "Er, so, can we get some real food? As much as Pyrr....um, Penelope would like to think, we can't live on chocolate alone."

Soon though, with Pyrrha leading them the five of them arrived at a café, where they all started to look through the menu hungrily. While the food on the ship was good, it was also quite plain and hadn't had much variety. This place had variety although, to Ranma's mind it was a very sort. "Lasagna, spaghetti, ramen, fried rice? This looks like the kind of place the parents created after years of arguing over what to feed their kids," he said with a chuckle, getting laughs.

With the food ordered, five of them talked quietly about what had happened since they'd escaped the ship. Listening as groups of people went by the café in large groups, many of them heading up-mountain, as Pyrrha put it. "Most of the housing districts are either right here on the shore or up on the fifth level of the mountain and lower. Oh, the levels are these kinds of stepped terraces, each of them is six stories tall. They provide farmland and flat ground for everything else."

"It seems like a nice place," Jaune murmured looking around thoughtfully. "I mean we're still technically in the port area," he gestured to one side, where through several more

buildings he could see the water of the ocean. "But it's all very clean and ritzy, like a tourist place maybe rather than a real, working port."

"Lower?" Ren asked. "Surely you mean fifth level and higher."

Pyrrha shook her head. "No. Mistral the Port was built from the top of the mountain down. Indeed, a lot of Mistral is like that. The oldest portions of the various towns and hamlets that dot the valleys are always built up and into the side of the mountains. So here, we're still on the fourteenth tier. The first and second tiers have long since been turned over to the anti-air defenses and Haven Academy, while the third to the seventh are housing districts and small-time commercial zones. That area is much like Vale. But the area between here and there as you go up-mountain, is where the main industrial areas are. Jaune, this area is actually a bit of tourist attraction, hence why it's so clean."

Ranma nudged his nose into her hair, frowning a bit at how he could still make out a tiny bit of the smell of the brown goop he'd given her. "That makes sense, since ya sound like a brochure. When will we see anything you actually call home?" Then he seemed to think about something, and he pulled back to cock an eyebrow at her. "Your father's not going to try the whole scare the boyfriend thing with me, is he? Laughing in his face might be a bad first impression."

"Oh I doubt it. He might try to browbeat you, but I doubt physically threatening you will be in the cards. As for a place I would call home... not for a while. A place I call friendly territory, that we'll be at in a few hours." Pyrrha laughed, leaning into his side more content than ever, feeling a thrill as Ranma nuzzled back into her neck, moving some of her hair aside to nibble at her ear.

Now that he was in a relationship, Ranma had a lot of pent-up ideas what to do with the girlfriend that he wanted to try out. Quite a bit of them were in the folder marked X rated in his mind, some of them were not and nibbling and cuddling like this was one of them.

"All right, cut it out love birds! Jaune said with a laugh. "You're Making the rest of us feel bad."

Speak for yourself Nora said, punching him not at all companionably on the shoulder, causing Jaune to wince even through his Aura. "I think it's cute. And maybe I should be taking notes."

Ren, who had better survival instincts than Jaune, stayed silent, before changing the subject after trying to avoid Nora's eyes for a second. "So after we get your weapons fixed up, how long do you think it'll be before the Council realizes we really aren't here for a dog and pony show and send us out on this real mission of theirs? I am presuming that the headmaster would not have allowed us to be pulled from classes as we were without there being a real mission for us here."

Ranma frowned thinking. "I'm hoping it'll be within a day, but we might have to put up with at least a day of showing the flag and that kind of crap."

At that, Pyrrha winced. "My manager will be fully onboard with the idea of such. My mother isn't so much into the whole public spectacle however, and she will take my feelings into account. As much as she might think in terms of Semblance marriages, well..."

"Heh, she'll think I fit the bill anyway." Ranma nodded, although a small portion of his inner self cringed at the idea of marriage being talked about so early.

"Exactly. She's pushed for me to become involved with men with powerful Semblances, but she has never pushed past marriage interviews once I showed I didn't like the man. And despite that, and her, well, not really seeing the problem of me being placed on a pedestal, my mother and I do have a stronger relationship than my Father and I do."

Jaune winced at that, while Nora and Ren just nodded. Soon the food arrived, and the group of young people were too busy eating to bother talking. As they ate, Ranma's scroll went off, and he pulled it out to see the silhouettes of the Mistral council. Before they could speak though, he muted the scroll, said, "Can't talk, eating, will call you all back tonight," before hanging up.

This nearly cause Jaune to choke and Nora to spew food across the table into Ranma's face so hard she started to laugh. "Oy, keep yer chewing to yerself or else I'll make you do squats until your legs fall off!"

After Ren got finished pounding on his back and the bit of dumpling he'd been eating had come up, Jaune hissed "You, did you really just tell a ruling council you can't be bothered to take their call?" he kept his voice deliberately low, looking around at the rest of the early lunchtime customers the café had, worried about being overheard.

"Yep. They aren't mine after all. Besides," Ranma smirked, "politicians are just like merchants. They believe in equivalent exchange. We got something they want, our skills and a certain public person. Now we've shown that we can play hardball and won't dance to their tune. They will soon know that they'll have to pony up something to us if they want us to do anything beyond the job they wanted us for. And even then, we might have some wiggle room."

Jaune's eyes widened, then narrowed, and Pyrrha watched with something like sisterly pride as he brought his tactical mind to bear on what Ranma had said. His eyes, now looking almost like Pyrrha's own – the crew not having enough colored contacts to go around – flicked to her and he smirked. "Heh, that might actually work."

After that the discussion shifted to Pyrrha telling them more about her aunt, never mentioning the woman by name, before Nora and Ren talked about a few of the adventures

they'd had while developing their weapons. The meal soon finished, Pyrrha then led the way out of the café, and soon out of the caldera that was Mistral the city. For all its importance as a port, it wasn't where the leadership of Mistral the country was, nor did Pyrrha's Aunt Thetis call it home.

But first, they had to head deeper into the city, which was an interesting experience. As Pyrrha had described, the interior of the caldera had basically been shaped into separate terraces. Each terrace was connected via several dozen trams, which were quite cool to be on Ranma reflected, as he sat on the top of one. There were seats both inside and on the roof of the tram, and all five of them had volunteered to be on the outside, watching as the odd tiered city passed them by as they moved through the city on a zigzag, heading up towards the river Mi'strach. There, they boarded a riverboat, which wound its way slowly upriver along several others, all of them carrying other people.

About an hour later they left Mistral the city behind as the ship began to pick up speed, heading rapidly on their way now as two of the other riverboats pulled up to a wharf there, leading into a small town. Their boat kept going until it was near to evening, pushing further into the first of Mistral's settled valleys, until they could make out the clear outlines of a second city. It was nowhere near as big as the port, let alone Vale, and was seemed to sprawl across the countryside from what Ranma could see, spreading out on either side of the river. But it was definitely a city, for all that.

"This is Athenia," Pyrrha whispered as they exited the boat. "It's the home of artists, leaders, trainers. It's said in Mistral that if Mistral the city is the sinews of the nation, then Athenia is its brain. I don't know about that, but it is where my family lives, both my parents and aunt, and, alas, where the Council does as well."

"Meh, they haven't left a message, so I suppose they're happy to wait for us to reach out to them. So, with that consideration out of the way, where to from here?" Ranma asked, nudging Pyrrha. "Do we head to your parent's place and beard the beasts in their lair first, or get your weapon looked at?"

"Or is there any place you want to see before you meet up with Thetis?" Jaune inquired.

Pyrrha smiled wryly. "There are several dozen stores I'd like to visit, but I don't think that you or the other boys would like any of them. As for sights... there are a few historical sites I'd like to see further upriver, but whether we will be able to do so or not is in question."

"Why?" Ranma shrugged, pulling at her hair. The two of them had basically cuddled the entire time on the riverboat, leaving the others to find a quiet corner and make out twice before returning. Ranma had liked it. He'd liked it a lot. "I can make more of that junk you know," he added, tugging at her hair again. "I just have to head to the nearest apothecary or old-time remedy store to get some supplies."

She chuckled at that, reaching up to touch some of her hair as well, bringing it down to eye level for a moment. "Could you do any other colors?"

"Sure, brown was just the default. I could do black, too. But that's about it."

"How did you discover how to do that anyway?" Jaune interjected. "You never struck me as the sort to be good at sneaking around Ranma, at least not in terms of being a spy. Scout work sure, but spying? The Grimm don't care what your hair color is, do they?"

"Actually, some do," Ranma chuckled. "Some Grimm do actually see with their eyes as well as whatever senses they use to pick out darker emotions. And all Grimm react to movement."

"Still doesn't explain the whole hair changing thing," Nora scowled, unhappy with her own hair. She liked being a redhead thank you!

"Eh, it was taught to me, by a certain old lady of my acquaintance." Spring had forced Ranma to learn some things just in case he ever needed to hide himself as she had to. Ranma already had a decent enough background in making medicines, thanks to spending time with Beni, who was quite good at them, and on the road with Genma, during which he had learned about them out of necessity.

It took them about forty minutes of traveling, like normal people, to find the blacksmith's shop. The sign over the entrance said 'Thetis Ironworks' and the clamor of hammer on metal, could be heard as well as some kind of electronic warble. At first the building looked almost anachronistic in comparison to a few of the buildings around it. Smaller than the buildings to either side and built like a tiny Greek Temple instead of a regular shop, but that was only the case as seen from the pedestrian street in front of it. When they moved through a side street, and back towards the smithy, Ranma realized that that was not the case at all. Instead, the building was like a small square placed against a larger rectangle, which spread back and away from the entrance.

Nor did Pyrrha lead them to that front entrance. She instead led them to a large back door, marked for deliveries. There she pulled out a key that none of the others had known she had, fit it onto the lock and opened the door. Inside, was a large storage area, an extremely well organized one, with labels, little placards here and there and computer screens connected to each set of shelves. On the other end was a ladder leading upwards, where Pyrrha led them.

On the other side of the storage area's interior door, they found themselves standing on a set of platforms overlooking several different areas each of which contained a different type of weapons development area. One looked like a blacksmith shop out of the European Middle Ages, complete with hammer, anvil and fire. On the other side of the platform Ranma spotted a group of blacksmiths working on a sword in the Japanese fashion, two people beating on a single weapon, their hammers hammering down in time with one another, as the master

blacksmith held the blade against the anvil, beating out the time with a pair of tongs in his other hand on the floor. In another cubicle was a kiln connected to a computer, and an electronics workbench, filled with several different types of circuitry. And in another, someone was working a weapon through mecha-shifting from one form to another.

“Fun,” Ranma murmured, winking at Pyrrha as she released his arm. *She is so cute when she’s all giddy about being able to go around with us incognito. Even though I do prefer her red hair as it seems more in keeping with her personality.*

Farther along the walkway, a foreman was watching a few of the apprentices below and shouting out orders to them. “Don't let it cool down! Tatsuo, you’re wasting too much time! Get the next piece fitted, while the metal of the transference tang is still hot! You'll never be able to mecca-shift out of the sword form without that annoying clanking noise if you don't!”

“Aunt Thetis!”

She turned, her face turning thunderous for a moment, before she blinked, staring at Pyrrha. “Who are... Pyrrha!? Girl what have you done to your hair!?”

“I’m sorry we came in the back way, but you know how Claret is about me, I wanted to avoid her shouting out my name where anyone could hear.” Pyrrha smiled, moving into the other woman's arms, and returning the hug tightly.

As they did, Ranma stared at the two women. Thetis looked almost like a carbon copy of Pyrrha except older, obviously, with a streak of gray in her ginger hair which was nearer to Nora’s hair color than Pyrrha’s normally crimson locks. Her eyes were the same, her features were much the same, as was her height.

“I’d heard you were coming, and hoped you’d make time to stop by. And this must be your team,” the woman said after pulling away from Pyrrha for a moment, beaming over at them, “and your current teacher. Or, is that ‘minder’?” she teased.

“Boyfriend actually,” Pyrrha blurted out with a giddy little laugh.

This caused Thetis to blink, her eyes flying wide, then narrowing, but she seemed to calm down slightly as she saw how young Ranma was as he moved forward to shake her hand. “Ah, you’d be the Azure Warden. Word has gotten around about you after that battle in Waypoint. So young but so skilled you couldn't be a student and were made a teacher of an entirely new class instead.”

“I was kind of shoehorned into it,” Ranma admitted. “Don't get me wrong, I like working with Pyrrha and the rest, and they definitely needed a wilderness survival class. But I'd prefer not to be at the school doing it. I wanted a hunter’s license, but Ozpin convinced me that the only way I was going to get one was to work with him at the Academy for a bit. I don't regret it,



obviously, but teaching doesn't come naturally to me and caring about rules comes even less naturally. And after this mission I might not be going back," he admitted with a shrug. *Not if I can figure out a way to find whoever's able to control Grimm, that's for certain.*

Thetis shrugged her shoulders, not seeing the problem. There was a long and storied tradition of Masters taking Apprentices as lovers in order for the Apprentice to pay for their learning, for good or ill, romantically or not, in portions of Mistral. Indeed, it had been common in the rest of the world before the Academies started to grow. And since she trusted her niece not to jump into bed with a creep, that was enough for Thetis. "I don't have a problem with it. Her parents might though," she warned, hugging Pyrrha from the side again. "But come on, let's head up to the house."

The house in question was actually built on top of the blacksmith shop, as if someone had simply transplanted a normal home and stuck it on top, which was somewhat like the way the entranceway was too. It was a very cool design, Ranma reflected as they sat down on a balcony overlooking the streets below. The boys waited for the girls to get the gunk out of their hair, becoming introduced to Thetis' husband as the girls raced off now that they had arrived at their destination.

His name was Shen Akhara and he had very clearly had married into the Nikos family. He was a short and mostly Asian looking man, somewhat like Ren almost, the most Asian looking person beyond Ren and Yatsunashi that Ranma had seen in a while. He was also the family cook and insisted on making a round of dumplings for them all, as part of the welcome. The boys had three each and Ranma was starting to teach Ren and Jaune some of his family's food-fu style of training when the girls returned.

Ranma turned from the food, letting Jaune have the last dumpling on the plate near them as he smiled at Pyrrha. "Much better," he approved, causing Pyrrha to smile happily as she sat next to her boyfriend, snatching a dumpling from the next plate of such that Shen brought out for them all.

The family atmosphere he and Thetis created enveloped the group as Shen started to tease Pyrrha about how she had gone from being the quintessential straightlaced girl to dating one of her teachers. But Pyrrha responded by pointing out Ranma's age again, and that Ranma had been the one to initiate things, causing him to squawked in shock. "I was not!"

"So you weren't trying to flirt with me when you brought that meal up to the crow's nest? And you were to the one who during a moment of madness induced by your greatest fear kissed me on the lips? My first kiss I might add?" Pyrrha questioned, her eyes narrowed in mock-anger.

"We agreed that didn't count," Ranma spluttered, now completely off-balance.

“We did, and then we kissed for real later.” She winked at him, then turned to her to Thetis, practically squealing, “And it was magical! Like all those sappy romance novels I’ve read all rolled into one”

Thetis laughed, happy that her niece had found someone who was worthy of her, and someone who, apparently was able to look past the outer shell to the teenage girl within. That made Thetis wonder, somewhat guiltily, when the last time she’d seen Pyrrha acting so openly was. *Not for a long time. Not since I made her weapons before her first tournament. I thought she was happy with all the attention and the Invincible Girl moniker. Now, now I don’t think she was.*

“I’m happy you found someone worthy of your affections Pyrrha and I think your mother will be too. Well, once she gets over her initial snit at not having been involved. But Sally called something like this you know. She seemed to see something there between you in the video of the two of you fighting.”

“Fighting as flirting,” Shen shook his head. “I’ve never understood that. Give me a good bottle of wine, a movie, and thou any day of the week. None of this sweaty bruising nonsense.”

“It is an acquired taste,” Ren admitted, while Nora grinned and Jaune shook his head, adding to the other boys’ words with, “one I have not acquired!”

“But we have to tell you something Aunt Thetis,” Pyrrha said, looking over at Ranma. “Ranma.”

Ranma nodded, and from out within his ki space, pulled the mangled remains of Milo, and set it down on the table between them.

Thetis gasped in shock and horror, staring at the weapon in astonishment. “How?! How did that...”

Pyrrha quickly began to explain how Milo had been mangled, and then how she had used the damaged parts as the projectile in a railgun effect that removed the Tritoshark’s head. That brought some cheers from both her aunt and uncle, before Thetis grabbed the piece up in her hands, turning it this way and that “I can see the diamondium blade is still intact, if warped. Good.”

Instantly, the older woman’s hands began to heat, so much so there was an actual heat haze, and the metal quickly began to glow.

“Is that your Semblance?” Jaune gasped, then pouted. *Man, everyone has these cool Semblances! When the heck am I going to awaken mine?*

Thetis nodded absentmindedly. "I call it Forge, not very original I know, but it's descriptive at least. I can heat metal or anything else I touch to any degree I wish. Control took me a while, and it's really Aura intensive. Still, I've always found that mixing Aura with Dust and the base metal has helped me to create my masterpieces. Although the starting point is important to which is why..." With that, the older Nikos began to work on the metal bits pulling the now heated pieces away from the single edge of Milo. She smiled then, and Ranma was struck by the fact that she had smile lines all around her face, to go with a voice like a bull, still female, but deep and loud.

As she was about to finish the work up on pulling the piece of Milo away, Thetis shook her head. Contrary to what Pyrrha had hoped the rest wasn't worth salvaging.

Jaune clapped his hands. "Hey Pyrrha, do you remember that Ruby once asked you if she could try to design a better version of your weapon?"

Pyrrha nodded, then as she heard her Thetis slowly taking a deep, prideful breath, Jaune hurried on. "Er, she, that didn't mean anything by it, Ruby is a weapons maniac, she was just worried that Pyrrha's bullets didn't have enough stopping power when fighting Grimm. Um, she designed Ranma's weapon and built it too. Ranma?"

Happy to help Jaune out from under Thetis's prideful glower, Ranma obligingly brought out his lance from his ki space, setting it down on the ground next to the table, while Thetis and her husband's eyes bulged at this second show of his weapon's space technique. "It was one of two she designed for me actually, I chose this one because I thought I needed a better ranged weapon and it's worked very well alongside my shield."

Setting aside the now freed blade in a bowl of water, Shen had brought out to cool, Thetis stood, picking up the lance, hefting it and then thrusting it forward before shifting it into its rifle mode. Nodding in approval, Thetis's earlier moment of ire at some other blacksmith taking issue with her master work faded. This Ruby girl wasn't a competitor after all, just a girl who apparently had a damn fine gift. "How old is she?"

"That's the most surprising part," Pyrrha announced, as Nora and Ren chuckled.

At Thetis's continued interrogative look, Jaune supplied, "She's only fifteen."

"They don't allow teens that young into beacon!" Shen retorted, shocked, but when Pyrrha nodded in agreement he was shocked. "A fifteen-year-old, really? I can't imagine the kind of life she must have led to become as emotionally mature as she would have to be to become a student at Beacon."

"I don't think she's so much emotionally mature, as fixated on becoming a huntress. And she's good," Ranma said, with a laugh. "Very good. Her endurance is abysmal, but her sniping skill are well above her freshman grade and her close-range skills aren't bad either."

“Plus, you can see what she did with that weapon. She even designed her own, which is this sniper rifle scythe combo,” Jaune enthused. “She uses it in combat to throw herself around like a jackrabbit. It's a really cool fighting style.”

The older woman laughed, her earlier annoyance disappearing entirely. “Now I'm interested. If you think she might have some designs that can give me a starting point, then call her up.”

Ranma nodded and told the others to hold on as he called Beacon, which would certainly be able to get through to Ruby. “Er, I know her sisters but not Ruby's.”

“I do,” Jaune said, and suddenly, Pyrrha and Nora were both smiling at him. “What? Why are you looking at me like that?”

Nora leaned in inquisitively. “And how exactly do you know Ruby's phone number?”

“And why did she come to you mind while talking about my weapon?” Pyrrha poured on, while Thetis and Shen watched her in some surprise.

Jaune flushed a little looking away. “It's not like that.”

“Now is that wishful thinking or denial I hear in your voice,” Ren whispered, causing Jaune to smack him on the shoulder.

The call went through after a few rings, surprising Ranma somewhat until he remembered that for all their travel, they'd basically been traveling north for most of it, and so had only traveled one time zone away from Vale, “Hello who is oh, Jaune! You guys arrived in one piece then? We saw something on the news about your ship looking almost as if it was going to explode a few hours ago, and then saw you guys all exiting like cannonballs, except for Ranma. That was really cool.”

“It was hilarious!” Yang shouted, stealing the scroll from her sister for a moment. “A hilarious way to the exit the scene, almost as if you took a clue from the sexy kitty in how to scarper.”

“Leave me out of your fantasies please,” Blake's voice came from somewhere nearby.

Yang turned her head, shooting a serious look offscreen. “Never!”

“I can picture Belladonna blushing from here,” Ranma stuck his own head into the pickup, interrupting the teasing session. “Serious things first guys.” he looked over at Thetis, motioning Jaune to hand the woman his scroll.

Thetis did so, nodding her head to Yang and asking politely if Ruby could be put back on. Yang blinked, stared at the older woman, then nodded, but was still peering over Ruby shoulder as she took the scroll back. "Yes, um... you, you wanted to speak to me?"

"I am Thetis Nikos, the woman who designed..."

"Oh my gosh oh my gosh! Your Nikos Design's chief blacksmith aren't you?!" Ruby's squeal was so loud that, unseen by the scroll, Blake whimpered in pain grabbing up a pillow and putting it over her ears. "I've read all this stuff you've posted in magazines about keeping the mech-shift time down and your ideas on how to incorporate dust into the metalwork, it's so cool! And Pyrrha's spear and shield are so amazing!"

"Aha, well thank you," Thetis said with a chuckle. "But alas Milo has gone to a better place." She angled the scroll to show the battered, now cooled bits of the former javelin/rifle/sword.

"What no, what happened to the poor baby!" Ruby shouted, looking distraught.

But Yang was quick to ask "Shit, so it really was bad out there huh? Were any of you hurt?"

Nora and Ren stuck their heads into the pickup, with Nora waving wildly for the scroll screen, as Ranma replied from behind them. "Well, while we ran into a lot of trouble out in the ocean but we're all okay."

"We'd heard that on the news," Blake interjected, and Ranma tried not to flinch as he saw an ear appear to one side of the pickup, Blake being unable to push her head into the scroll pickup along with the two sisters. "What exactly happened?"

Realizing this was a discussion between friends who hadn't seen one another in a while, Thetis clapped her hands. "I think that we need to have two conversations going here. The more time we save in the planning stage, the faster I can get you your weapons back Pyrrha. Ruby, Jaune and Pyrrha both thought that maybe you had ideas for upgrades that could be worked into Pyrrha's weapons? Pyrrha has already told me that she would like to see a better armor design, and I have plans for that, but if you have a plan for a weapon, all the happy to look at it."

Ruby gasped, "But I'm only a student, I mean I'm really happy that you're looking at it but..."

"Please, if you have any suggestions or designs, send them to my scroll number. I don't care about your age Ruby, only your skill."

At that Ruby calmed down, nodding her head firmly. "Well for one thing, I think her rifle needs to be a higher caliber. I realize that would mean the rifle's shaft would need to be thicker but..."

Ruby was interrupted there by Nora, Yang, and Blake all shouting "That's what she said!"

For a moment Ruby didn't seem to get it, while Pyrrha blushed and the boys all looked amused.

"Right," Yang said from the other side, clapping her hands, as her little sister collapsed into a blushing but blubbering mess. "Why don't we let Thetis and Ruby talk, with Pyrrha helping out as needed. The rest of us can fill one another in on what's been going on, because let me tell you, you guys might've run into trouble on the ocean but we ran into trouble here in Vale too."

That discussion took a while, with both sides of the two extremely close teams exchanging stories.

Soon conversation on a new weapon ended, with Thetis leaving with the shaft of the metal, and offering Ruby a strong recommendation if she ever wanted to come and work for her. "Or I can give your name to a few people I know in Vale. Whenever you want it. After all, sometimes the Hunter business doesn't quite go the way you wanted it to, you know?"

"Oh my gosh I will so keep that in mind, not that I think of anything will happen to me, I mean I'm so fast and speed is power, but you know, it's well it's a real ego boost to hear that from you," Ruby admitted sheepishly.

Thetis chuckled, and she and her husband, who had been taking down notes for her throughout the discussion, left heading down into the smithy talking quietly amongst themselves. Meanwhile, Weiss had arrived from the library and joined the conversation. Jaune and the others had finished describing their ocean adventure, although Pyrrha had to pinch Nora very very hard on the thigh to make her to stop from squealing about Ranma and her relationship. Pyrrha felt that revelation should be told to Yang in person or at best in private.

Yang in turn had begun to talk about Ruby's new friend and what trouble they'd run into down at the docks. "Along with this monkey boy, who's been making eyes at our kitty girl."

"He's not my type. His abs might be nice, but that's about all he has going for him," Blake said with a roll of her eyes.

To Ranma's surprise, Yang smiled, at that, a small, secretive little smile, not one of her big boisterous ones, and he had no idea how to interpret it. Regardless, something else about their story was odd to him. "It's interesting that Ironwoody..."

That was as far as he got before Weiss squawked out, "What!?" And Yang, Blake, Nora and even Ruby all dissolved into laughter, while Pyrrha shook her head with a laugh and Ren and Jaune exchanged smirks. "How dare you speak about general Ironwood like that!"

"One. He ain't my general. Two, he and I had a discussion on this point before. And three, if he wants to try to stop me from calling him names, he is welcome to step up and try again."

Weiss twitched visibly through the pickup, then shook her head with a sigh. "I can now see why my sister really doesn't like you."

"Well, if Winter removed the stick from her..."

Pyrrha saved Weiss from further insults to her sister by covering Ranma's mouth with her hand. "That's quite enough thank you. There are ladies and children present."

"I resent that remark and resemble it, but I'll take it instead of hearing more cursing," Ruby said with a pout. "Honestly, it's like none of you ever heard of the curse jar!"

"Excuse her, she was dropped on her head by our father several times as a baby," Yang groaned. "Seriously sis, how lame can you get?"

"Have you all gotten any information of more about what mission they were so anxious to have Pyrrha and her team therefore?" Blake interjected before the two siblings could completely derail the discussion. Fun as they were, and Blake thought they were very fun, she was still wondering about what had convinced Ozpin to lend one of his freshman teams to Mistral for real Hunter work.

"No, but we all think it is far more than just a loose thinly veiled idea of trying to get me back, which I'm had quite happy for," Pyrrha replied honestly. "We should learn more either tonight or tomorrow morning."

"What about you all, here anything new beyond the fight against Roman?" Ranma asked, forcing himself to look at Blake with one eyebrow rising in question. He'd made a note of Roman being involved in the dock escapade and also noted the severe lack of Neo. *I wonder what the little ice cream monster was doing instead?*

Blake slowly shook her head. "Nothing good I'm afraid. Still, we should be soon. The headmaster has promised to keep me personally in that loop."

Just then the door to the house opened, and two people walked in. One was a tall, red haired man who walked with a limp, his hair just slightly redder than the normal ginger color rather than the dark crimson of Pyrrha's hair. Next to him came a woman, who looked related

to Pyrrha, although not as much as her Aunt, with another shock of reddish hair, a little more ginger than red in her case and the emerald eyes that Pyrrha must have inherited.

Pyrrha smiled at them, not as warmly as she had Thetis, and she also concentrated on her mother for a moment to the exclusion of her father who obviously noticed this semi-lukewarm reception if the tightening of his face was any indication.

Shaking his head, Ranma looks down at the scroll, "Pyrrha's parents just arrived, I'm going to have to sign off here. We'll call when we have information what the mission we were being sent on if we can. If we can't, you might see us in the news eventually. Otherwise, we'll see you back at Beacon."

Sensing the seriousness in Ranma's tone, team RWBY instantly agreed, leaving Ranma to meet his girlfriend's parents with only the rest of team JNPR beside him.

**End Chapter**

**And that is it for episode 1, Chapter 19, part 1 LOL. Long name I know, but consider it like a TV show that's changed format from a hour long to a thirty minute structure. Hope you all enjoyed it even if it was a bit longer than I expected. I like world building. It will take maybe two more similarly sized chapters to get to the Ranma-centric action. Then about five more say, maybe six before I think we can come to a point where this story can naturally end, either permanently or perhaps only until one of my other Ranma fics is done as a sort of End Season 1 thing. We will see.**