“Friends, buddies, pals. Lend me your ears. Hearken to mine words.” Yang’s eyes glittered eerily in the light; the glow of the TV screen reflecting off the bottle between them all as the credits played. “Dost thou feel lucky, knaves? Dost thou?”

“Uhhh…?” Jaune rubbed the back of his neck as his fellow blonde gave the bottle’s tip a flick, rotating it a full ninety degrees as he looked between them all and began to sweat. Visibly. As the only guy in the group, the bent of his thoughts was obvious. “Maybe?”

“I thought this may come up.” Blake sighed and hugged the pillow between her legs a little harder. She loved her sleepwear, don’t get her wrong, but it had become a liability recently. Just taking a seat in them stretched her modesty to the limit. She might not have cared much about it, but she still had some. “I’ll be opting out of the customary prize.”

Yang pursed her lips but accepted that with an easy nod… Odd. Blake had had the idea that the blonde didn’t know what brakes were for a while now. That she didn’t press was good, don’t get her wrong, but it was surprising. “That’s fair. Truth-or-dare for you then?”

Blake shrugged, the shoulder of her yukata sliding slightly down before she pulled it back up. “Sure.”

It wasn’t as if she was being interrogated. Schnee or not, Hunters or not, these were just a bunch of schoolkids. She could handle anything they threw at her.

“I have no idea what this is. What are we doing? What are you talking about?” Weiss said, as expected. No matter her bluster about her experience with sleepovers, none of her reactions so far had backed those claims up. Blake had been living in the wilds with a bunch of freedom fighters for the last decade and even she knew what spin-the-bottle was. What was her excuse? “Why should whether I feel lucky or not matter?”

“... Okay, I should have seen this one coming. I blame the scotch and whiskey triple ripple.” Yang smacked her lips as Weiss let out a loud ‘hey’... Also, scotch and whiskey ice cream? Where had *that* been, *how* had Yang found it, and *why* was that even a thing? That sounded like

something someone would do to pretend they didn't have a problem, only to make the problem obvious to everyone who asked. "So, for those of us who have never had a childhood, this is a time-honored sleepover tradition."

There was an excited, extended squeaking noise when Yang put her hand on the bottle. It didn't take much time or effort to figure out it had come from Jaune and, so no one bothered to comment. Too much effort to spend on something so small.

Jaune wasn't a bad guy, and Blake didn't dislike him in small doses, but Yang had the right of it. He needed to man up. A lot. Anything else she had to say on the matter had to be out loud, which she wasn't going to do.

Tact was a thing she possessed when she wanted it. Yang didn't need any help in crushing his ego and Blake suspected she never would. The Faunus had seen drill sergeants that had been softer on their recruits than Yang was on him; Blake approved.

If he was going to be her partner, he needed to be less - him.

"This game is known as spin-the-bottle. A game of luck for civilians. A game of skill for Hunters." Yang set the bottle to spinning with a deft flick of the wrist, the glass running perfectly smooth on the carpet, bumps or not. "There aren't many games better when it comes to bonding."

"How would it do that?" Weiss, who had leaned forward a little over far for someone that wasn't interested, fell back on her heels, butt-first. "I mean, this sounds similar to something that I've done before with several acquaintances of mine. Of course, there are some minor differences, but…"

Blake didn't believe that for a second. Weiss couldn't have been any more clueless about this without being Jaune. No. Worse than Jaune. Even he knew what they were up to and that was just *sad*.

“Right. The spinning bit isn’t made out of hard light Dust crystals and coated in powdered silver. This was on short notice, so my party games butler found himself on the back foot.” Yang’s face was perfectly smooth as she said this, that grin of hers not changing even an inch when Weiss gave a commiserating, if reluctant, nod back. “It's so hard to find good help these days.”

Weiss let out a put upon sigh. “It always is.”

… Was she serious?

“That isn’t important right now though. We can talk about our problems with the help later. What is important are the rules of the game.” Yang continued with another flick that upped the spin by an order of magnitude, the bottle now just a solid blur. Show off. “You spin the bottle.”

“Yes?”

“You spin this son-of-a-bitch as hard or soft as you want. Give it a turn. Do what you want as long as you keep it in the circle and you get one try. Just one...with a single exception that I shall explain if it ever comes up.” Yang held up a finger to impress this need, the concept of ‘one’, on the heiress and Blake’s natural enemy by default. “Once this baby starts spinning, there are no take-backs. Just consequences.”

No one said anything as the bottle slowly, very slowly began to slow over the course of three minutes. It was - tense. Mostly. Jaune nearly shaking himself into another dimension detracted from the atmosphere.

“The bottle has to stop on someone. Someone that isn’t the one to have spun it in the first place.”

Blake frowned and pulled her pillow up higher on her chest, her ears twitching under her bow as it ground to a halt to point at her. It hadn't stopped yet, but she was more than able to see how this was going to end.

"And that's when the games begin. When friendships are forged. When boys are turned into men and girls into women." Yang sat up, her sleeping dress bunching up around her legs in a thick cotton puddle as she tapped a pair of fingers suggestively against her lips and shot Blake a quick wink. "All through a couple seconds of heaven."

"Or just some truth-or-dare." Blake narrowed her eyes and wrinkled her nose at the blonde, getting nothing more than a carefree shrug and a raspberry in return. "Not everyone is comfortable with casual makeout sessions."

"Or just some truth-or-dare. Blake has the right of it," Yang acknowledged while Jaune flushed and Weiss sounded out 'casual makeout sessions' to herself, bemused. The heiress might very well have never heard those words put together like that, or in that order...and, now, Blake was sorry that she'd said anything. Having Weiss find out what that meant the hard way would have made her year. "Spin the bottle isn't for making people uncomfortable. Its to have fun and help with getting us to know each other better. "Allow me to demonstrate with something easy." Yang cleared her throat as the bottle came to a stop in front of Blake, just as expected. "Truth or dare, Blake?"

"Truth." Once again, this wasn't an interrogation. Blake had nothing to worry about. "Hit me."

"If you had to choose between being able to read and a limitless supply of fresh fish, what would you choose?"

Blake rocked back, momentarily shaken and indecisive until she remembered that the question she'd just been fed was a hypothetical; not an actual question. "Excuse me?"

"Reading or fish, Blake." Yang didn't blink. Not even once. "This shouldn't be hard."

“... I’ll have to pass.” Blake huffed. “What kind of question is that? Ridiculous. You’re Ridiculous.”

“An easy one, Blake. That’s what kind of question that was. Ridiculous was the entire point,” Yang said with the sort of drawl people used when they thought someone had just said something really dumb, making Blake bristle. “Alright. Let’s try again. Favorite color?”

“Black,” Blake spat, glad that her turn was over and that she now had some time to reflect.

Just like what Yang had said about her Semblance, and how her clones might have had very temporary souls before they vanished to wherever they went after she was done with them, this was going to keep her up at night. For at least a night. Two at most. Books or Anima tuna; what a cruel dilemma...

“And there we go. That’s how you do it.” Yang, entirely oblivious as to Blake’s newly created and short-lived internal struggle, moved on. “You don’t have to be serious when you ask a question. You don’t have to be silly either. Just ask.”

Weiss, with a hand to her chin as she gave the bottle a thoughtful look, replied with a quiet, “I see. What about these...dares, of yours? How do those work?”

“Good question. For this one, we’ll just pretend that it was Jaune’s turn and I was the one that won the toss.” She fixed a frozen Jaune with a look, the set of her form changing from that of a lifelong slacker to what Blake could only call ‘Sienna at her most pissy’. Back straight, eyes slightly narrowed, her every muscle lined with a dangerous tension that could send a full cell scurrying to the frontlines rather than stand a single second longer in the presence of their leader. Pissy...and sort of creepy. “I choose dare.”

“Uh… Kay?” Jaune licked his lips, his eyes moving about in his skull like a hunted rabbit’s as he looked for help that wasn’t there. Blake actively avoiding eye contact might have helped him realize this. “How about you - touch your nose?”

Yang, with her lip curling disdainfully as she did so, held a finger;--a single pinkie finger that rose up to her face with unerring grace and poise to give her nose a prim little tap, right onto the end. “Weak.”

It was one of the more - tense - moments of Blake’s life. For someone who’d handled more than a few pipe bombs in their lives, not all of them of the highest quality, that meant something… Did Yang have a personality disorder or something? That was a serious concern.

Normal people didn’t act like that.

What had come out of Yang’s mouth, with her body language as it was, had come out of her with all the force of a marshmallow. Blake knew how hard it was to separate how you acted from what you said, thanks to her background, but Yang had done it as easy as breathing. Like she’d been doing it all her life.

… There was something there.

“Please don’t hurt me.”

Blake, if she looked, expected that she might see tears. More than expected. He wouldn’t be sobbing or anything, thankfully (that would have been awkward), but he’d proven himself to be more than a little weepy.

Blake didn’t look though. Once again, he might expect help and she knew better than to attract attention when the Grimm were on the hunt. She couldn’t have survivor’s guilt if she was dead.

"A bit of a cop-out there, Arc, but I guess we can't expect anything too daring in the beginning. You get a pass." Yang, Blake had no other word for it, *twisted*; transformed back to the bright-eyed firestarter she knew and tolerated before turning to look at Weiss. “We’ve got to ease into this before we get into the good stuff. Right, Weissy-poo?”

“If that ever gets out to the press, I’ll sue you into the ground, Xiao-Long.”

"Your turn." The bombshell let Weiss’ threat go without comment as the heiress took control of the bottle with obvious trepidation. With thumb and forefinger, as if she’d just caught hold of a live snake instead of a formerly full container of grape drink. “You’ve got this.”

“Clearly.” Weiss, eyes closed, gave it a twist...and it had everyone backing away as the damn thing started spinning like a top and swerving with near laser-guided focus at everyone’s shins.

Blake was gone and on the couch before the first revolution had even finished. Ilia had had much the same problem and pattern recognition was an important life skill. As in, important if you wanted to keep your life.

“Shit! Watch it!” Yang backward combat rolled out of the area just as the bottle veered through where she’d been sitting with a *whoosh*; the end of a flail without its tether. Her modesty was only barely kept intact, and Blake could only put it up to luck. “I knew you’d try to kill me one day, Schnee, but I didn’t think it would be today!”

“If I’d been trying to kill you, you’d know, dolt!”

“I do know, damn it! I can see it happening! I’m not blind!”

Jaune, being the slowest and least aware of them all, was the one to stop the bottle's momentum with a yelp and a flash of Aura across both his knees… Blake had only one thing to say as their toy for the evening did cartwheels in the air and Jaune acted as if he'd just lost both his legs to a Schnee 'Strikebreaker' mine.

… Grape Co. bottles were inordinately tough, by-the-by. Also, when it landed on the carpet to point directly and unerringly at Blake, possibly sentient.

"Fucking *oof*." Yang ran a hand over her forehead and flicked a hand to get rid of the imaginary sweat. "I haven't seen my life flash before my eyes like that since the last time my uncle tried cooking something more complicated than toast. You should just switch out Myrtenaster for that thing, fill it with the Dust loadout of your choice, and become the terror of Grimm and Huntsmen everywhere."

Harsh, but fair.

"Oh? Is that what I should do?" Weiss, with murder and embarrassment carved into every line on her face, reached out for the glass instrument of death. "Please, tell me more. I am always open to new ideas."

"Nuh-uh-uh." Yang tutted. "You're being rude, Weiss. I'm Yang. Not Blake. Yaaaang."

"I hate you so much."

Blake sighed. Luck wasn't on her side today it seemed. "Truth."

"I-" Weiss blinked at the Faunus, then flushed. Her return back to the ground and off her feet after having jumped as high as the ceiling was a great deal more graceful than the blonde's had

been, not that it was hard to do. “Oh. Oh, yes. We were in the middle of something, weren’t we? … Truth, hm?”

“Yes.”

“And you won’t say anything but the truth, yes?”

“It is sort of expected.”

“I will hold you to that. There have been things about you I have been curious about. You have been cagey and I now believe it is time to put my curiosity to rest.” Weiss’ hand returned to her chin while Blake tensed, quietly more than ready to grab Gambol Shroud off her nightstand and jump out the window before anyone realized she was escaping. This could end - badly. “Where did you get that dress of yours?”

… That hadn’t been anywhere near the top five things Blake had expected to come out of Weiss’ mouth. Something about how they’d known she was a Faunus all along had been more likely, right next to Yang telling Jaune to hold her down so that they could sell her back to her parents for a fat stack of Menagerian Lein at Weiss’ direction.

She had a very healthy imagination. That that scenario had been a good, strong chunk of the book she was currently reading might have had some effect.

“I have never seen that cut before. Neither do I recognize the style or material.” Weiss reached out and Blake was too stunned to move before the white-haired girl had a fold of Blake’s outfit between her fingers. “It looks spectacularly drafty.”

Blake, carefully, extracted her sleeve out of the other girl's grasp and took a breath. Then another. Then yet another for good fortune and to stop her heart from beating out of her chest. "I prefer to call it comfortable."

"It might be at that," Weiss conceded with another look, "but, really. Where did you get it?"

"It was a gift from...someone I knew." Blake licked her lips and pushed away the hurt that came with that sentence. "I couldn't say where they got it, but it's a yukata, made with Mistralian spider silk."

All she could remember was that it had been painfully expensive, worth more than the entire cell's budget... That Adam hadn't paid for it had been a given at the time. And romantic.

She regretted it now...but that didn't change anything. It had happened and that was it… It was too nice to lose over something as vague as 'morals'.

"Mistralian… Spider silk you said?" Weiss nodded at Blake's muttered 'yes'. "I might have to ask Pyrrha for more details then. Thank you."

Blake, now free to breathe again, nodded back in return. "You're welcome."

A loud clap had both of them jumping in place. Jumping, and glaring at a brightly smiling Yang as she slowly, and shamelessly separated her hands.

"And, now, you've got a twentieth of the experiences required for a full childhood. I'm proud of you." She clapped again and, this time, didn't stop. "Congratulations."

Weiss, this time, held what she clearly and dearly wanted to say to herself. Smart. “I pass my duty onto you, Blake.”

“... Of course.” Pillow dropping between her legs where it belonged, Blake scooted, gracefully, forward on her bottom until her goal was in easy reach. She was stuck now. No point in resisting… That she actually *wanted* to see where this went was secondary. “Let the dice roll.”

“Momma needs a new pair of shoes! Gods, don’t fail me now!” Yang loudly butt in as was the usual for her as their shiny roulette dial did its work. Spin, spin, spin again. “I’ve got my mortgage on the line!”

They wouldn’t. Not if Blake had her way. Yang hadn’t been entirely incorrect when she’d said that this was a game of skill for Hunters. Of timing and the usage of *just* enough force to get what you needed and not a single ounce more.

She was good at that. She sort of had to be, seeing as she wasn’t a powerhouse. The right amount of force in the right place and time was her entire thing; child's play.

Blake was starting to get a feel for the blonde’s personality, she thought. For what *might* have been her actual personality, whatever that may be. She wasn’t entirely confident in that, but it was enough to know that her question would be answered if she played it right and Yang didn’t pick ‘dare’.

Blake didn’t think she had to worry about that.

“Oh, my! Oh, me and my stars!” Yang gasped, hands clasped over her heart; eyes sharp and smile sharper under an affected persona, an effective smokescreen. “So soon? So quick? My heart isn’t ready!”

“Don’t worry about your heart,” Blake said dryly. “I’m more interested in your mind.”

“Oh? Really?” Yang tittered and began fanning herself. “Aren’t you just the sweetest?”

Yang couldn’t resist a spectacle. If there was a show, she had to make a go of being the center of it… They were all curious about what her Semblance was; the team, that was. They’d all asked Yang about it at some point or another, if separately, only to have her say ‘it's complicated’.

Much as Blake disliked it, they were going to be, theoretically, spending the next four years together. A Semblance was a hand of cards that everyone had to lay on the table, just for the sake of cohesion and planning.

Jaune didn’t count. Blake was pretty sure he didn’t have one. That, or knew what a Semblance was in the first place.

Her partner’s claims as to otherwise weren’t convincing...but, if anyone knew what it meant to be an imposter…

Anyway, there were pragmatic reasons to know what Yang could do. Plenty of those... If Blake was honest with herself, she was just curious. Really, really, curious. Why Yang needed an explosion-proof box room ate at her. Also, at her slowly fraying sanity.

Sleeping next to what might very well be a bomb lab wasn’t conducive to a good night of sleep.

“Yeah.” Blake sighed on the inside. Exasperation was a very real, very painful affliction. “I’m a real sugar cube.”

So bad...but necessary.

“Well, you’re in luck. This lady right here has always had a bit of a sweet tooth. Also, the ability to read subtext. You want to know something about me. That isn’t a surprise.” Yang puffed her chest up and stuck her nose cockily up into the air. “Ask away.”

Bingo.

“Alright then. This question has been a long time coming.”

“Got a pair of F’s right here, honey, and I ain’t talking about a failing grade.” Yang’s chest puffed up even *further*, her bust pushing out against the material of her nightdress in a way that had Weiss and Jaune making choking noises… Blake assumed it was for different reasons, but she could be wrong. “If you want to know how I got them, all I can say is healthy living, good food, and some really good genetics.”

“... Thank you for volunteering that information.” Blake forced back her stress headache and tried again. “But that wasn’t the question.”

“It wasn’t?”

“No.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

“... You’re no fun.”

“For the sake of the team, I have to ask,” Blake ignored that last comment entirely (that had been going around lately), putting Yang back on a highly theoretical backfoot. “What is your Semblance?”

“I was going to ask that too,” Jaune added from the side. “I’m glad that I didn’t even get to. Good job, partner.”

“Thanks.”

Yang’s gasp this time was soft. Her eyes teary and the hands to her chest now pressed against it to cover a very imaginary wound. “Et Tu, Jaune?” The golden-blonde turned to face Weiss...then moved right on by, the lack of mercy in her heart more than evident. “I am betrayed. Assailed at all sides, enemies at every turn.”

… That sounded familiar.

“Don’t you try to distract us with your nonsense, Xiao-Long,” Weiss’, her cheeks stained with more than just a hint of pink, no doubt realizing the same thing that Blake had as she pushed. “Don’t you try to distract us with those obscene lumps on your chest either, you deviant. We’re better than that and we will not be lead astray. Not this time.”

Obscene? A single one of Yang’s breasts might have been the size of her head, but that was a little dramatic, wasn’t it? That must have been the envy talking.

Jaune’s pectorals were bigger. And he barely *had* any. It had to be said.

Yang sucked an exaggerated breath in through her teeth. “You’re no fun. In fact, you’re the anti-fun. The enemy of fun. You’re like - some Atlesian infiltration bot from the future, sent to kill the entertainment industry for your Colour War Revisionist AI masters.”

How did Yang *think* of the stuff that came out of her mouth? Did she even think at all? … That had been kind of funny and she’d had to hide a chuckle, sure, but Blake meant what she’d said.

“All we know at this point is that we could put you in an oven and you’d be perfectly fine.” Weiss huffed. “Forgive us if we want to know more.”

“She doesn’t sweat either,” Jaune added his own input. “And did anyone notice that she was carrying a popcorn popper under her arm? The sort you’re supposed to put on a stove? A *working* popper?”

“We all noticed, Jaune,” Blake affirmed his observation as Yang’s head bounced between the three of them. “And none of us can forget how she hocked up a thousand-degree-loogie on one of the school plates, now can we?”

“Okay, first off, I wouldn’t fit in an oven. Those things are *tiny*,” Yang defended herself. Nonsensically. “Second off, I *do* sweat. Sometimes. It just takes a lot of effort and is mostly redundant...and let's not kid ourselves, you aren’t exactly a CrossFit workout, Boss.”

“... You aren’t wrong.”

“Third, yeah. That’s a part of my Semblance. Heat. That’s why you never see me within three feet of candy or ice cream unless I’m shoveling it in my face.” Yang crossed her arms over her chest with a pout. “Lastly, that wasn’t a ‘loogie’. The closest definition would be ‘organic phosphorus’. Totally different.”

Weiss stiffened as if she'd just had another rod shoved up her butt, right next to the fifteen or so that were already there. Blake, not having *any* experience with that sensation, might as well have been a jack-in-the-box with how quickly her slouch vanished. "***That was what?***"

"I had it under control from the start. I wouldn't have dropped something like that in public otherwise." Yang waved them off like she'd just said something completely normal, ignoring Weiss' calls of that 'not being the point'... Acting as if she hadn't just admitted to releasing a highly volatile substance while they were within ten yards of other people. How Weiss knew about it was unknown. How Blake knew about it was self-explanatory. "As I've said before, my Semblance is complicated."

… Blake was a great deal more happy about not poking that triple-locked, dust-alloyed security chest in Yang's half of the room. She still had her fingers attached and that was a good thing.

"Screw it though. I guess you guys are right. I've been kind of a gigantic tease about all of this, haven't I?" Yang took the end of one of her sleeves and rolled it up to her elbow. "Just give me a second and everything will be explained."

"A second?" Weiss asked, her voice tight and high; her entire face the splotchy red of fear-filled outrage. "For what?"

"To set the scene. Or try." Yang *glared* at her hand like it had insulted her...something that wasn't her mother. "Pulling up feelings stronger than vague annoyance and frustration on demand isn't easy, alright?"

"Are those necessary?"

"... Not really. It just makes it easier. And more dramatic… There goes my easy street cred." She sighed. "I would have looked so *cool*."

Yang said that word a lot. Blake wasn't entirely sure that it meant what she thought it meant.

"Don't worry, Xiao-Long. Nothing you could have done would have impressed me anyway."

Yang, after working her jaw in stunned silence, blinked. "Okay." She blinked again. "That did it. Thanks."

"Did wha-" Weiss (and everyone else) jumped back with a shriek when Yang's arm went up like a bonfire. With an explosion of sparks. With a curling fireball burning a black stain into the ceiling as a wave of heat tightened her flesh and her eyeballs dried in their sockets… Somehow, by some unholy miracle, the carpet was untouched...and was that sandalwood? Had Yang been carrying *sandalwood*? "OH, MY GODS!"

Jaune, understandably, just screeched incoherently, tossed open the door to the halls, and vanished into them at a hysterical sprint.

Blake echoed the sentiment. Even if she 'knew' that Yang wasn't hurt, it was a very different thing from 'knowing'... People bursting into flames was normally a *very bad thing;* The couch had a really broad back and was, as she'd expected, fireproof. Wonderful cover.

"COWER, FOOLS! WEEP! TREMBLE IN FEAR AND KNOW YOUR PLACE BENEATH ME!" Yang boomed madly as a curtain of flame washed over her hair with an acidic *snap* to add a tint of red; the nails on each hand noticeably grew before Blake's eyes. Turned from nails to claws to talons and her pupils narrowed into reptilian slits... That mumu of hers wasn't looking as funny as it used to all of a sudden. "YOU STAND BEFORE THE DRAGON OF VALE, AND THEY DEMAND TRIBUTE!"

Yang had been right. It was an awe-inspiring sight, one that would be seared (haha) into her memory for the rest of Blake's life… Along with what happened next.

“I AM FIRE! I AM DEATH! I AM THE ENDER OF WORLDS! I AM-”

Right as a hellish orange glow began to flare from deep within Yang’s throat to do...*something*, Jaune came back; face twisted into a mask of terror but with a fire extinguisher in hand all the same. With the sort of hand movements that could have only come from long practice, Jaune yanked the safety pin, pulled the hose up and at a suddenly very quiet Yang’s horrified face, and pulled the trigger.

Silence reigned now. All there was was the hissing of fire retardant foam crashing into a flailing blonde girl’s guttering, sputtering, retreating form; Jaune followed in grim lockstep, utterly merciless when she fell to the ground and started doing the last part of stop-drop-and-roll.

Blake, against all common sense or reason, pulled out her scroll and switched to camera mode.

“S-stop! Quit it!”

Weiss, who had joined her behind the couch at some point, did the same.

“Oh, god, it tastes like- pabbppl!”

Faunus and Schnee. Schnee and Faunus. They connected. They bonded, a frame at a time.

“Damn you, Aaaaaaaarc!”

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They’d be doing that every Thursday from now on.