

A streak of light from the window struck his face, a cool breeze shifting the curtains and sending faint sounds of distant chatter into the room. He opened his eyes, a familiar warmth pressed close to his chest. He embraced the form laying on him closer, his fingers gliding through her dark, silky hair, caressing her smooth, pearl-white skin. He could not believe how perfect she was – or how lucky *he* was.

Her eyes opened as slowly as his own had done, looking up at him. They were brown – hazel, if he wasn't mistaken, but it's not like he would know these things. He was no poet, after all.

The girl let out a long yawn and spoke up: "Morning, Sark... What time is it?"

"It's around noon, I reckon," came a voice from the other side of the room before Sark could respond.

He looked over towards a white-haired boy sitting cross-legged on his bed, fiddling with an axe in his hands. "Now I ain't one to object to sleeping in, but you two are making the rest of us jealous."

"Bah, there's just two of ya, and I hardly think Euc's one to get jealous," the girl murmured.

"Over you, Beryl? Any man would be jealous." Sark responded, the girl letting out a happy squeal before burying her face in his chest.

"Unless they're gay or somethin'," added the other boy, tapping the base of his axe against the tips of his horns – two straight, bone-white and rather sharp protrusions at the top of his head.

"...Right," Sark answered, peering to the side before returning to cuddling his partner. Noon or not, today was their one day off from any training, lessons and their part-time jobs. They had earned a good rest.

And they would have gotten to do just that if the door wouldn't swing open just then, a young man sporting a green pony tail rushing inside and heading straight for one of the nightstands.

Beryl opened one eye, following the boy as he ran across the room. As he moved, one could see the back of his shirt and jacket sway from side to side – it always would. "Morning, Euc."

"Ah, yes, yes, mor... Good afternoon, rather. You two are finally up, I see," 'Euc' responded as he pulled open a drawer and began frantically digging through it.

Sark arched a brow. "Eucario, what exactly are you doing?"

"Hm, what? Oh, nothing, I was just looking for... A thing. Yeah, here it is," he said more to himself than to anyone else in the room, stuffing whatever he had just gotten into his uniform jacket. "I'll be out for the night – if you need me, leave a message on my scroll."

"Ah, another conquest, eh, kid?" The white-haired bull faunus asked with a grin.

"...Yes, sure, Ifu, but for god's sakes would you stop calling me 'kid'? You're a week older than I am," Eucario groaned.

"But I *am* older, eh?" Ifu teased, twirling the axe between his fingers. It was rather large for what it was and Sark could only guess how hard that thing was to wield in a fight, but Ifu wasn't one for practicality in the first place.

Eucario sighed and shook his head before leaving without another word. Sark frowned: he could tolerate Ifu for all his faults, but even after a year he still didn't trust Eucario one bit – and the rest of the team was aware of this.

Ifu set his axe aside and dropped down from his bed, whistling as he headed for the exit himself. Before he left, he turned to the two once more – to Sark in particular.

"Listen, kid – I know you don't trust our lot. But you gotta loosen up at least a bit. After all, you still owe us both a drink!" he said, leaning against the door frame.

Sark couldn't help but smirk. "Right. We should get to that soon."

"Maybe you two could teach me somethin' about girls. I just don't get 'em," Ifu uttered with a deep sigh.

"I think a part of the problem might be that you'd ask these dorks for help before, y'know, asking an actual girl?" came a response from Beryl.

Ifu shook his head. "Nah, nah, picking up girls is something a guy would know more about than a girl."

Sark squinted at his teammate, tilting his head. "How would *you* know that?"

Ifu opened his mouth for a response, but then shrugged. "Idunno. Movies?"

Beryl snickered. "If you need advice, just ask."

Ifu slowly nodded. "Well, sure. I'll keep that in mind. Well, you two enjoy your day, I got some work to do."

With that, the bull faunus left the two alone - they could hear him fiddle with the lock from the other side and walk off. As soon as he did, Beryl crawled up to Sark's face and planted a kiss on his lips.

"So... We got the room all to ourselves, then?" she purred out.

Sark smiled at her, then glanced to the side and huffed. "Three... Two... One..."

The lock jiggled again and Ifu hurried inside once more. "Don't mind me, forgot my axe, you two keep at it I'll just-"

"Ifu *get out!*"

"Yep, yep, on it, later, ciao, adios-"

The door shut again, the lock turned, and they were alone once more - but good lord did Ifu know how to spoil a moment.

Sark looked over the selection of stiff drinks laid out on the shelves in front of him. Rum, tequila, brandy, gin, vodka, beer, wine, kahlua, lager... He was rather clueless about such things – he preferred energy drinks. Alcohol just made him nauseous.

“Whaaaaatcha looking at?” came Beryl’s voice from his right. She was carrying a basket full of various foodstuffs, cosmetics and magazines – stuff mostly she and Eucario needed, really. That guy used ten times as much makeup as she did.

“Booze. I mean... Ifu’s probably right. I don’t think I’ve even really tried to get to know them. I wouldn’t say that Euc’s done much there either, but... Maybe sharing a drink sometime could help loosen some tension.”

Beryl smiled brightly. “That’s great to hear!”

“...But I don’t know what I should get. Like... What *can* they drink?”

“I... Think they can drink the same as us, Sark. Well, I think I can pick something out – but I forgot my bag in the car. Could you be a dear and go grab it in the meantime?”

Sark nodded and hurried off. He passed a group of faunus on the way out, paying little mind to them as he headed for the car. The sun had already set and the street lights turned on – he could see little clouds form as he let out each breath in the cold, early spring air. He quite enjoyed nights like these – especially when he was with Beryl.

He unlocked the car and looked inside - being the genius he was, he checked the back first when she had sat in the front on their way there. With the bag finally in his hands, he locked the car and headed back towards the store. When he was about halfway there, he heard something - a sound which seemed eerily like a gunshot.

In an instant the boy dropped the bag in his hands and ran towards the entrance. As he did, a sign on the side of the building caught his eye.

‘Faunus Will Not Be Served’

Sark crashed through the door, face-to-face with a female fox faunus holding a gun up to the store clerk’s head. He was an old man - maybe seventy or so - and was shaking in fear. He was clearly pleading for help - without a second thought Sark rushed towards the faunus, slamming his elbow into the girl’s arm.

The gun was knocked out of her hand and the clerk dropped to his knees. One well-placed punch sent the faunus down on the floor - she was clearly no real threat.

But Sark barely registered that his strike had even connected. He was more concerned with finding Beryl - she was a huntress, but she wasn’t a fighter. She was a healer, the one who had kept the lot of them going in every mission the team had been on - even against thugs like this, she would need help.

But it was okay - they were hardly the worst they had faced...

Sark rushed into the aisle he had left her in.

He had just been out for a minute. No more than that.

She was just a healer.

Rum, tequila, brandy, gin, vodka, blood, wine, kahlua, lager.

He had only heard one shot.

Her pearl-white, perfect skin was paler than the norm. She had been wanting to go out to the beach so many times, but she burned oh so easily. Still, they had been planning it for the summer - maybe even head outside of Vale for it. Ifu had even suggested menagerie. He said a portion of the island was like an entire resort.

Two men before him. One of them a bird of some sort, feathers from his head. The other - a horse faunus, with a green tail peeking out from the back of his shirt, matching that same eucalyptus green ponytail he had always sported. He looked rightly terrified, he did.

She was a healer, not a fighter - maybe she was hoping Euc would help her. Maybe she never saw him. Maybe she was too busy picking out a drink for him and Sark to share - they could be such good friends if they just tried.

A piece of glass crumbled under Sark's foot. Hopefully it wouldn't go through his shoe - they were nice shoes. Beryl had helped him pick them out. She was always so kind and helpful.

There was a rather loud thud as a gun fell to the ground, right from Euc's hands. The other man was keeping it together well - he even raised the weapon against Sark. Ifu would always commend Euc for how calm and collected he was. What was his deal now?

A healer - but Sark had been trying to teach her to defend herself better. Worst came to worst, she could use his own sword. He hadn't brought it along, of course. It was their one day off, they didn't want to even think about training.

Another gunshot, Sark lunging into the air. Moments before hitting the ceiling, he changed direction, launching into a kick to the birdbrain's head, slamming it into the shelf behind him. His aura had been up, but he was dazed enough by the blow.

Some of the alcohol was still intact. A few good bottles - maybe Beryl would have gone for one of these. Would she like tequila? Ifu probably would. He seemed like the type of man to have a taste for tequila.

Sark grabbed one of the bottles as he landed, running forward, towards Eucario. Sark smashed the bottle against one of the shelves as he did, sending shards of glass and alcohol everywhere - not that much would change from it.

"I'm... so sorry," the man in front of Sark uttered. He did not put up his aura.

Maybe it was for the best.

"Sark! Sark, what are you doing?" Ifu asked, but Sark didn't answer, too busy packing up his belongings. He had already collected all of his gear from his locker, so now it was just a matter of getting all of his clothes. He didn't have many - he had shared a closet with Beryl. He didn't know where those clothes would go. Probably to her family.

"You can't just up and leave like that, kid! Where will you go? You're still enrolled, you can..."

"Just shut the fuck up, Ifu! I can't just stay here and... do *nothing*. Not when shitstains like that are out there. Not when they're studying here, even," Sark growled out, stuffing a jacket into a suitcase which was already a bit too full.

"So, what are you going to do? Go out, find them and kill them? Face the White Fang on your own? Kill random faunus on the street? What's your plan?" Ifu continued to question him as Sark slammed the suitcase shut.

"My plan is to leave. I don't know what comes after that, and I'm sure as hell not telling you," Sark responded. Before he could reach the door, the larger bull faunus stepped in his way.

"You came here to become a huntsman, kid. That's what you wanted to do with your life. That's what Beryl wanted to do, too. Are you really going to leave that behind? Everything you two had worked for?" Ifu pressed him.

"Get out of the way, Ifu," Sark forced out through his teeth.

"She'd have wanted you to keep moving forward, Sark. Not..."

Ifu didn't finish what he was about to say as a deep red blade lashed out, resting under his chin.

"Get out. Of my way. Bull."

Ifu didn't resist or fight, he simply stepped aside. As Sark opened the door to head out, he spoke one last time.

"Keep yourself safe, kid. And good luck, whatever it is you end up doing."

Sark left without an answer.

There wasn't much light in the room, just a set of lights above the mirror right in front of Sark. The table in front of it was in a sorry state, covered in junk from one side to the other. Paperwork, crumpled up photos, old cigarette butts, miscellaneous garbage and a whole lot of cans. Most of them were coke, with one still half full besides Sark.

He'd hit rock bottom. The bull had been right - he had no plan and no purpose, the hell was he expecting? After living out on the streets for so long, this gig had come as a blessing at first, but at this point he was just a puppet in the hands of greater powers. Worst of all, he'd been transferred to some faunus-loving fucker and forced to fight for him.

But not for much longer. The young man took hold of his blade resting by his side, just as the door opened.

"Oi, Sark! You're up! Facin' some newbie goin' by 'Alter'. She's a faunus or somethin'," came a shrill voice, then the door closed again.

Sark smiled, taking the can in front of him and having a sip as he stood up and headed for the exit.

Today was his last day spent as a dog, but he could still beat one down before he was done.

He would keep moving forward. Whatever that might entail.