

## **Chapter 2-Delirium**

“My head...that stuff was a lot stronger,” Weiss grunted, slowly lifting her head upwards. She grumbled as she went to stand, finding her legs and arms striking something. Looking down at her arms, she found golden restraints pinning her by her elbows and wrists to the dark stone arms of a chair.

“Ruby!” she called out, her voice echoing around the room.

Weiss glanced around the room, darkness consuming the far reaches of the vast room whilst candles burned in silver holders pinned to the wall illuminating the robed statues towering over them, with four candles burning in tall golden stands on either side of a small staircase. Though the candles burned brightly, their glow was nothing compared to the white crystal altar with a single central stand that sat a few inches in front of the stairs. Weiss eyed it closely, studying its elegant sculptured beauty thanks to the slim stand and wide top though the eyesore of four red mechanical arms fixed to the table’s corners tarnished the beauty.

“Focus, Weiss!” she snapped, “Beautiful things later escape first.”

She struggled, wiggling and tensing her arms and legs, trying to break or, at best, weaken the restraints. But unfortunately, Weiss was so preoccupied with freeing herself that she failed to notice a blackened robotic claw lowering down from the ceiling, extending toward her chest. It's three-prong flexing slightly as it got close.

Weiss’s eyes went wide, pupils dilating with fear as she felt an intrusion into her body, “NO, DON’T!” she screamed, “Get out of me!”

Beams of blue light rippled out of her chest as the prongs pushed into her chest. To her surprise, there was no blood or pain, only a grasping tugging sensation as the arm began to pull away from her.

“What’s going....on,” Weiss muttered weakly, her chest rising.

The arm continued to retract, plucking a glowing white head that matched Weiss’s own from her body, the prongs clasped tightly around the spiritual ponytail.

“That’s me,” Weiss stated, her voice having a faint echo. She eyed her limp, lifeless body, “What the hell is this? This is no way to treat the heiress to the Schnee Dust Company. I demand you put me back in my body right now!”

Her eyes widened as she found her body getting further away as the arm manoeuvred toward the altar.

“This has to be a nightmare, right,” she told herself, “I can’t...it’s not possible even by Atlesian Science standards that a person can’t be separated from their body like this!”

Crackles of red energy shot out of the mechanical arms, with two surging out to meet Weiss’s spirit head. She cried out as the energy jolted into her spirit form, causing her to flinch.

“Any moment now, Ruby will come bursting through the door and wake me up...yeah, that’s how it always goes,” Weiss said, fear tainting her voice as the other two energy tendrils latched onto her temples.

As her spirit reached the centre of the altar, the prongs released her as the energy tendrils held her. She could see the sloping towards a hole in the centre, wisps of thick smoke starting to rise.

“COME ON RUBY! WAKE ME UP, PLEASE! COME...HELL, EVEN YANG...SOMEONE GET ME OUT OF THIS NIGHTMARE!” Weiss pleaded as a small section of the altar opened up underneath her, “What’s going on? Please don’t do this,” she cried, spiritual tears trickling down her face, “I’m a Huntress in training...I’m an heiress. You can’t treat me like this!”

A four-clawed hand made of black smoke rose, reaching out towards the trapped spirit and spreading its fingers. As its palm touched the chin, the fingers slowly clasped; Weiss screamed out in pain and terror as the claws pushed against her temples and cheeks. Her continuous scream echoed as the claws punctured through, invading her spirit form.

Weiss jerked and strained as the smoke seeped into her form, bloating out the white colouring, slowly replacing it from her chin to ponytail with an ominous black with a faint red glow. The energy intensified as a bright red beam shot out from the altar striking Weiss’s physical mouth whilst two extra claws lowered, gripping Weiss by her head and chin, pulling her head back and mouth open allowing the beam to enter her mouth.

The smoke hand finally finished pushing into the spirit just as the spirit began to break down into separate particle beams that shot down the beam and back into Weiss’s body, a loud fragmented scream accompanying the process. Weiss’s body jerked as her spirit entered her body; the claws released her head.

Silence fell once the energy from the arms died down; Weiss shook her head, groaning under her breath. Finally, the restraints clicked, unfastening as Weiss pulled her hands up to her face.

“What just happened?” she groggily asked, resting her face in her hands.

She moved her hands, glancing down at her chest and then toward the altar. Weiss sighed, hefting herself onto two legs; a loud, startled cry echoed around as she fell flat on her face. She strained, trying to push herself up but surrendered to the idea of sleeping off the confusion and heaviness spreading throughout her body.

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“WAKE UP, WEISS!” a shrill, excitable voice screamed.

Weiss shrieked, bolting awake as she fell out of bed, entangled in the sheets and quilt.

“Don’t do that!” Weiss snapped, glaring at Ruby.

Ruby took a step back, “Someone woke up on the....”

“If you finish that sentence, I’ll freeze your legs,” Weiss snapped, huffing as she picked herself out of the bedding.

“Sorry, Weiss, just that it’s lunchtime. You missed breakfast, and Yang suggested I wake you for food.”

Weiss sighed, staring at the apologetic look on her friend's face, feeling bad for snapping, “I’m sorry, Ruby, I had a bad night.”

“How so?” Ruby asked sweetly as she helped Weiss to her feet.

“It’s nothing. You go on. I’ll be down in a minute.”

Ruby looked concerned but said nothing more as she exited the bedroom. Weiss stared down at her chest, replaying the image of her spirit being plucked from her.

Even as she dressed in her patrician attire, she couldn’t shake the images from her mind, the groaning of the zipper on her boots triggering a hint of panic as it began to remind her of the energy crackling around her.

“Calm down,” she told herself, toying with the overhanging portion of her satin belt.

She inhaled and exhaled multiple times as she made her way from her room and down to the dining room. The scent of various foods drifted up her nose, making her feel a little queasy.

“There she is, the sleeping beauty!” Yang cheered as Weiss took a seat.

“I slept in, so what?” Weiss mumbled, rubbing her eyes.

Ruby walked around, grabbed the coffee pot and poured Weiss a cup, “This will wake you up.”

Weiss stared down at the cup, the steam rising from it as she altered the coffee to her liking, but as she stirred away, the steam seemed to shift into black smoke.

“Weiss?” Ruby asked, resting a hand on her friend's shoulder.

“What?”

Ruby gestured to the shaking spoon tapping the edge of the cup as her hand trembled, “Everything okay?”

“I’m fine...just...” Weiss stammered, trying to formulate an excuse in her mind.

“If something’s wrong, you should tell us we can help,” Ruby said with a smile.

“You’ve always helped us with homework; the White Fang, even the icy people need help,” Blake added, lowering her book.

Weiss shook her head, “You’ll laugh at me or worse, think I’m crazy.”

“We won’t, won’t we, Yang,” Ruby stated, eyeing her sister.

“Okay fine!”

Weiss took a deep breath, “Something happened to me last night. I was in a strange room; there was a device that plucked me out of my body and performed some sort of procedure on me before returning me to my body.”

Yang stifled a laugh before letting loose a loud series of laughs, “The Ice Queen actually has nightmares!”

“YANG!” Ruby snapped, stamping her foot.

“I’m sorry, I couldn’t help it to think someone like Weiss can have nightmares,” Yang replied.

“It wasn’t a nightmare!” Weiss retorted, “It was real. I felt pain; I felt myself leaving my body.”

“Are you sure?” Blake asked, “Stuff like that has never happened in Remnant before.”

“I’m sure. I blacked out after having a drink and woke up in a strange room; there was a crystal altar,” Weiss explained, lowering her head.

“Weiss,” Ruby muttered softly, “Nightmares can sometimes feel real. It is possible that you were having a nightmare.”

“No, it wasn’t. It actually happened. Some help you guys are!” Weiss said, slamming her hands into the table.

Ruby outstretched her hands as Weiss stormed out of the room.

“Ruby, deal with your sister; I’ll handle Weiss,” Blake stated, hurrying after her teammate.

Ruby nodded, placing her hands on her hips, “That was uncalled for. I told her we wouldn’t laugh.”

“I said I was sorry,” Yang replied, flicking her hair, “You have to admit it was a little bit funny.”

“I’ll agree, but at least I held it back,” Ruby stated.

“Is everything alright?”

Ruby and Yang turned to see Igor exiting the kitchen.

“I heard shouting, was the food, not your liking?” he asked.

“It’s not the food,” Ruby replied, a thought drifting into her mind, “*Weiss did seem pretty serious about her night.*”

“Okay then, if you need anything....” Igor said, turning to leave.

“Wait!” Ruby called out, “Igor, you know the layout of this mansion and the grounds, correct?”

“Why, of course, there isn’t a spot around here that I don’t know,” Igor replied.

Ruby nodded thoughtfully, “So you’d know if there was a room with an altar that Weiss was taken to last night?”

“An altar room. There’s nothing like that on these grounds. Did something happen to Miss Schnee?” Igor stated, showing a look of concern.

“She reckons what she saw was real, but....” Ruby began

“It seems a lot like a nightmare,” Yang interrupted, standing up.

“Oh, okay, well, if you need me, come find me,” Igor said, returning to the kitchen.

“It’s a nightmare,” Yang said, walking up to work, “Weiss is most likely getting worked up over it because she’s never dealt with one before. She’ll come around.”

"I hope so. I'd hate to see this team...my friends divided over this."

"I do have an idea to help Weiss out," Yang stated, "Remember when you had your first nightmare when you were three?"

Ruby nodded, "Yeah, that time a Grimm worm got stuck in my ear."

"Remember what I did for you, the fun night?" Yang asked, receiving a look of realization from her sister, "Let's do that but for Weiss."

"YEAH!" Ruby cheered, "I'll ask Igor for some help."

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Weiss grumbled, rushing down around the ground floor, doors flying open as she burst through them. A look of sheer desperation on her face as each room didn't present her with the results she desired.

"Weiss!" Blake called, hurrying up to her, "Calm down, please. It's not like you to get work up like this."

"I need to find that room again; something bad may happen to me!" Weiss cried out, flinging open a door, grunting in frustration at the brooms within.

Blake sighed, grabbing Weiss by her shoulders and throwing her against the wall, pinning her with all her might, "Just calm down for a second, will you? You're too emotional because of this. I get something happened last night, some very real to make you act like this."

"You believe me?"

"Of course. You believed me when I told you I wasn't with the White Fang anymore, so it's my turn to believe you with this," Blake said softly, releasing her grip on Weiss, "If this weren't real, you wouldn't be acting like this. You would have shunned Yang and moved on."

Weiss sighed, muttering a quiet "Thank you."

"Now look me in the eye and tell what the room looked like," Blake stated, patting Weiss's shoulder.

"It had a white altar that was like glass. It was dimly lit with only candles though the altar was glowing. There were also pillars and mechanical arms; that's all I remember."

Blake hummed thoughtfully, "Right. Let's find it together. If something like that exists, we'll find it. I suggest we split up that way; it's easier to cover more ground."

“No. We stick together just to be safe,” Weiss barked, folding her arms, “We do this together or not at all!” she called, walking away.

Blake’s cat ears folded as she followed Weiss, “It’s going to be a long day.”

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“Thirty rooms, thirty rooms and nothing,” Weiss grumbled, staring into the empty spare room.

Blake rested her hands on her friend’s shoulder, “We’ve covered all floors....”

“But not the grounds,” Weiss interrupted, “Let’s head outside.”

“Weiss,” Blake began, “We’ve been at this for hours. It’s clear there’s nothing in the mansion.”

“So you’re giving up?” Weiss asked, shrugging Blake’s hand off

“No, it’s just...it’s close to dinner time, and you haven’t eaten yet,” Blake stated, taking a step back.

“Fine. Go eat your fish. I’ll search the grounds myself,” Weiss retorted, storming off.

Blake gave chase calling out for Weiss in protest, trying to get her to listen to her. Ruby smiled as the two girls reached the foyer, her face falling at the frustrated demeanour of Weiss and the panicked look on Blake’s face.

“Everything okay?” she asked.

“She’s just trying to find the altar room,” Blake replied.

Ruby blocked her friend from exiting, “Not tonight, your not. Instead of dinner, we planned something fun, and it’s mandatory.” She grabbed Weiss, dragging her back up the stairs, ignoring Weiss’s pleas to “unhand her”. Blake followed quietly behind, following the duo to the first floor’s entertainment room.

Once inside, Ruby released Weiss’s arm and beamed brightly.

“Don’t ever do that again, please,” Weiss huffed, glancing around at the room.

A blue sofa faced a sizeable flat-screen television covering most of the wall; speakers were placed neatly underneath it. A spread of sandwiches, drinks and popcorn was laid across a shiny blue table.

“What is all of this?” Blake asked, staring from Ruby to Yang.

“A little team movie night,” Yang replied, “I did something similar back when Ruby had nightmare problems to distract her.”

Weiss cocked her hip, “You think I need distracting?”

“Yes,” Blake sharply replied, not giving it a second thought, “We’ve cased the entire mansion and found nothing and you wanting to check the grounds is....”

“Obsessive,” Ruby interrupted, moving between Blake and Weiss.

Yang agreed, “Kind of like Blake with the White Fang.”

“It’s time to let it go and focus on better things,” Ruby added, hugging Weiss, “Please, for your friends, just have fun with us.”

Weiss released a heavy sigh, turned on her heel and left the room; Ruby’s heart sank as she called out for her friend only to receive nothing in response.

“Why won’t they get it,” she muttered, walking down the corridor, “What happened to me was real. I don’t need distractions I need focus, not silly things like movie night.”

She slowly made her way to her room, eyeing Igor polishing the doorknobs.

“Good evening Lady Schnee. How was the movie surprise?” Igor asked, bowing gracefully.

“I don’t care for it right now. I’m more focused on finding this room,” Weiss said, “Do you know of anything?”

“Why yes, of course. I did tell your friend earlier, but she must have forgotten. There’s an old site underground that can only be accessed at midnight every night,” Igor explained, “Just head down to the basement at midnight.”

“Thanks, Igor,” Weiss said gratefully, “I’m going to need a lot of coffee to stay awake till then.”

“Of course. I’ll bring it straight to you.”

Weiss grinned broadly, formulating a plan in her head as she walked into her room.

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*"The long wait was nearly over,"* Weiss thought, descending the stairs into the basement, eyeing her clock on her Scroll, "Now I'll get some proof."

She wrinkled her nose at the damp, musty smell surrounding her as she entered the basement. Weiss switched on her Scroll torch light, shining it around, trying to find a door or something that would lead her to the altar. Chimes sounded out from the foyer as the time on her Scroll hit midnight. The ground rumbled gently as several slabs on the far wall shifted, sliding in all directions as a giant crystal door formed, creaking as it opened invitingly, whispering to the heiress.

Weiss slowly and carefully stepped through the door, candles burning in holders guiding her down a winding staircase. She gasped, jaw-dropping, eyes wide as she stopped on the final step locking eyes with the glowing white altar.

"It is real," she muttered, cautiously making her way into the chamber, "Hello?" Her voice echoed, like the clicking from her heels as she walked around.

The cool glass felt smooth like silk to her fingers as she traced them over it whilst kneeling in unison with her fingers travelling down the narrow part of the altar. She straightened up, poking her finger into the arms and bolted to the altar's corners.

"Everything is real....I knew it wasn't a nightmare!" she said triumphantly, "Wait until I show the others, then we'll see who's laughing."

She held up her Scroll and began to snap pictures, capturing everything around her from every angle.

"The question I have now," she said aloud, "Is what the hell happened to me here?" Weiss stroked her chin thoughtfully, recalling how Igor knew about this place, "Maybe he would know more about what happened to me."

She collapsed her Scroll as she made her way back up the stairs, grinning and chuckling to herself; as she reached the foyer, a familiar voice called out.

"Weiss? What are you doing up this late?"

"Blake!" Weiss exclaimed, "It's real!"

Blake cried out in shock as Weiss grabbed her by the arm and dragged her down into the basement. Weiss dragged up to where the door was, gesturing toward it.

"Go through; you'll see it's real!" Weiss cried out, "The door just appeared!"

"Erm Weiss," Blake said hesitantly as she pointed at the wall, "There's nothing there."

“Of course there is. It’s a crystal door,” Weiss stated, resting a hand on her hip.

Her face fell as she turned to face the blank wall; frantically, she began to feel and slap the wall.

“It was there. I swear on my life it was there,” Weiss cried out, “Wait..”

She turned sharply to face Blake., eyes wide with disbelief as she pulled out her Scroll, flicking through her gallery, finding no sign of the pictures she had taken of the altar room.

“Where are the pictures? I took a lot of pictures of it,” Weiss said frantically.

Blake walked to her friend, pulling the Scroll from Weiss’s hand, “Weiss, there’s no door. Your starting to worry me now. Whatever happened last night has been playing on your mind too much.”

Weiss snatched her Scroll back and walked out of the basement, with Blake following behind, “Fine, don’t believe me, but tomorrow night I’ll show you!”

Weiss stormed away from Blake, making her way to her room, the door bouncing off the wall as she threw it open, slamming it behind her.

“Everything okay, my lady?” Igor asked, from where he was grabbing the empty coffee jug and mug, “Forgive me for saying you seem frustrated.”

“You’d be right,” Weiss replied, throwing herself onto the bed, “I found what I was looking for, yet Blake didn’t see anything, even the photos I took...” she broke off, lifting her Scroll, revealing the pictures of the altar room, “What the? How are they back?”

“If I may,” Igor interject, “It could be nothing but the old rumour of the master’s family is that the altar room only reveals itself to believers. If this is true, it could be your friends don’t have the same belief in the room as you do.”

“Is that possible?”

“Possible, yes,” Igor replied, “I believe you, and I believe that things will work out for you and your friends. One day they’ll believe you, Miss Schnee, mark my words.”

Weiss hummed thoughtfully, not paying attention to Igor leaving the room, “How do I make them believe?” she questioned. As the door clicked, Weiss walked up it and locked the door, sighing as she stepped out of her heels. Her hand struck the light switch, plunging the room into partial darkness as the moonlight crept through the windows. The lush carpet brushed against her feet as she returned to the bed, stripping herself down to her underwear before flopping face first into the bed.

As she moved around getting herself comfortable, the skin on her legs slowly became paler as a few cracks of black veins formed against the skin on her right thigh whilst her fists clenched.