



RWBY


ROMAN HOLIDAY

E. C. MYERS

Story by KERRY SHAWCROSS and EDDY RIVAS

Based on the series created by MONTY OUM

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data available

ISBN 978-1-338-76086-6

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 21 22 23 24 25

Printed in the U.S.A.

23

First printing 2021 • Book design by Jeff Shake

Cover illustration by Courtney Brenek

CHAPTER ONE

IMAGINARY FRIENDS

Early in the morning on her eighth birthday, Trivia Vanille chased the wild, pink-haired girl through the still, dark rooms of the mansion.

The quiet time belonged to them.

The best friends often played Tiptoe Tag at night after Mama and Papa went to bed. One of them, who was “it,” had to catch the other girl, both of them moving as silently as they could. Not making noise wasn’t just part of the game, it was essential, because if anyone heard them, they would have to stop playing.

There were other rules, which they made up as they went along. Trivia caught a flash of bright hair heading into the family room. She wasn’t allowed to go in there. But those were her parents’ rules, and Neopolitan never cared about those. Trivia darted inside with a sense of dread, just as Neo, in a frilly princess dress as pink as her hair, hopped lightly onto the antique coffee table. Neo raised a white-gloved hand to halt Trivia. Then she leaned over and poked her index finger at the floor. As soon as she touched it, she yanked her hand back, shaking it and blowing on her finger dramatically.

Trivia gasped and jumped backward to the doorway. They were adding a new rule to the game. Her eyebrows rose. *The floor is lava?*

Neopolitan nodded and stepped backward onto the cream-colored couch. She bounced up and down on the cushions the way she wasn't supposed to, a taunting smile on her face.

Trivia backed up several feet into the hall so she could get a running start. She took a deep breath before she dashed and sprang from the threshold to the embroidered Mistrali rug. It slipped beneath her on the smooth floor and she almost tumbled into the lake of molten rock, but she caught her balance at the last moment, arms windmilling comically. It was only safe to stand on things that covered the floor without touching it yourself.

The girls moved around the room in an acrobatic dance. They remained the same distance apart, like mirror images of each other. Neopolitan bounced gracefully from sofa to table to piano bench. Trivia followed more slowly, more cautiously. Less steadily.

Neo crouched on the edge of a console table to allow Trivia to catch up. But when Trivia reached from the arm of a wingback chair to tag her, Neo backflipped out of her grasp—so she missed the girl's ankle and slapped something solid instead.

The vase tipped and rolled. Trivia lunged, but her fingers only brushed against the vase as it went over the edge of the table and plummeted into the darkness.

The floor was not lava. It was hard, made from the oldest redwood trees of Forever Fall forest. The vase shattered. The sound of tiny glass shards scattering around the room reminded her of rain tinkling against the roof.

The silence, too, had been broken.

Neopolitan, balancing with one foot on an end table, covered her mouth with both hands in shock, her mismatched pink and brown eyes wide.

Trivia froze. Maybe her parents hadn't heard that. She hoped that they hadn't. But the footsteps overhead and then on the stairs, the light filling the house, told her it was just a foolish hope.

Neopolitan twirled around and retreated into the shadows, behind a small mountain of wrapped and ribboned boxes of all shapes and sizes: birthday gifts. Trivia scrambled to find a hiding place of her own. She slipped her small body under the sofa just as the lights came on.

Heavy steps. Her father's slippered feet stomped into view.

Papa sighed. "She broke the Akaibara vase."

"Trivia? Trivia, where are you?" Mama called out.

Trivia folded herself smaller under the sofa, eyeing the door. When she pressed a hand against the hardwood floor, she felt a sharp pain. She gasped. A sliver of glass glinted in her palm. How had one of the fragments ended up here, clear on the other side of the room?

"Sweetheart. It's okay. We aren't mad," her mother went on.

"Get out here right now, young lady." Her father's tone of voice hinted at his barely controlled anger. His feet moved out of view.

"Trivia. Please." Mama's voice trembled. "Jimmy, I'll check the other rooms."

It was her mother's concern that convinced Trivia to come out. She stuck a hand from under the sofa, but before she could emerge, firm hands gripped her ankles and yanked her backward. Her

hands squeaked along the floor as she tried to hold on. Her palm left a thin streak of blood in the varnish.

Her father dangled her upside down from her ankles. The brown tulle of her dress gathered around her shoulders. She stared up at her father.

He looked calm, wearing the same poker face that served him so well as city manager for the Vale City Council. But there was rage behind his shadowed eyes. She closed her eyes and covered her face with her hands.

“Why aren’t you in bed?” He shook her up and down, punctuating each word.

“Jimmy. That’s enough,” Mama said.

He dumped her onto the sofa she’d just been sheltering beneath and she sat up, smoothing her dress out anxiously.

Mama knelt beside her and put her hand over hers. “What happened?”

Trivia shook her head.

“If you’re ever going to speak up for yourself, now is the time,” Papa said. “Say something, anything, and we’ll forget any of this happened.”

Trivia opened her mouth. She wanted to tell him, but the words didn’t come. All she could manage was a horrible rasping sound, like she was gasping for breath. Her throat tightened. Her eyes burned with tears. She clamped her mouth shut and shook her head.

He tossed up his hands. “What are we going to do with her?”

Mama stood and retrieved Trivia’s communication board from

the coffee table. She handed it to her daughter. “What were you doing down here? How did the vase break?”

Trivia glanced at the empty spot behind the pile of presents. Mama turned to follow her gaze.

“You came to sneak a look at your birthday gifts?” she asked.

Trivia shook her head and slapped the communication board in frustration. With shaking fingers, she moved three letters around on the board. She held it up to show her mother.

“N-E-O,” Mama read. “So your ‘friend’ broke the vase.” The weariness in her voice had nothing to do with the late hour.

“Don’t encourage her, Carmel,” Papa said. “It’s all in her head. Something she makes up to avoid responsibility.”

“She just has an overactive imagination,” Mama said.

“It isn’t normal.”

“Don’t use that word,” Mama whispered harshly. “Dr. Mazarin says we have to give her space.”

“She has plenty of space. This is what we get for it.” He gestured at the broken glass on the floor. “That was an expensive accident.”

“It’s only money.” Her mother’s voice had a cutting edge to it.

“And the things I have to do for that money. For my family.” He shook his head and looked upward. “Clean this up.” His order didn’t seem to be directed to anyone in particular. He left the room.

Mama sat next to Trivia on the sofa and put an arm around her. Trivia snuggled in. Her fluttering heartbeat slowed, and she soon started to get sleepy.