Rock gets around. Different girl each chapter. Supposedly all within the same overall timeline, though not necessarily in this order. Fic-trade with Pantera Ichigo/Sabaku no Kyuubi. I get Black Lagoon, he gets RWBY.
Bao fixed Rock with an appraising scowl as the businessman trudged into his bar. While he didn't seem to be in the company of the Lagoon Company's more notorious gunwoman, this did not automatically put Bao at ease. Even if he wasn't scoping the place out for a future visit for the rest of his coworkers, the Japanese businessman always seemed to attract trouble wherever he went, and that wasn't something Bao was eager to have in his bar, which had been destroyed fifteen times, all involving the Lagoon Company! But in all fairness, he had noticed Rock to have a certain diplomatic tendency that could just as easily diffuse a situation as Revy was to incite it.

And he was a paying customer after all.

"Whisky," he said tersely without prompting. "Whatever's open."

Bao raised an eyebrow. This was unusual for the Lagoon Company's errand boy, but then, maybe he was still slowly adapting to the city he had been thrust into not a year ago. Either way, Bao did not pry as he poured a tumbler a finger full with single malt and slid it over to the man in the dress shirt and tie, who emptied the glass in a single gulp, before sputtering in a fit of coughs.

"Easy there," Bao admonished, wondering how much of the bottle would be left before the night was over. "This stuff's meant for sipping, not shooting."

"Then give me something for shooting," Rock extended his arm with the glass in it, and only then did Bao notice the weary look in his eyes, how unkempt his clothes and hair were. Even with his attire, Rock wore his collar loose - every day Rock spent in Roanapur would have been casual Friday in a Japanese office building. But even had Bao been the most easygoing CEO in the world, if an employee showed up looking the way Rock did just then, he'd have told him to take the day off and maybe go see a doctor.

Reluctantly, Bao refilled his glass, and took the liberty of providing him with a glass of water as well.

"Dare I ask?" Bao said. Despite his better judgment, he was curious. And seeing that there were only a few customers seated at the scattered tables and none at the bar itself, he didn't see the harm in asking.

Rock wrinkled his nose and squinted his eyes. He seemed to be thinking of something, but it wasn't coming to mind right away. He went searching at the bottom of his glass to see if he could find it.

He didn't. Maybe if he looked again…

"Well, look who the cat dragged in…" came a loud, boisterous voice at the door to the bar. Before Bao could so much as offer the man a pat on the back, a blonde woman in a pink tank top, a short green skirt held in place by a loose white belt and a prayer, and a pair of bright pink angular sunglasses, despite it being the dead of night, came and sat right down next to Rock, throwing an
"Hey there, Romeo," said Eda – for that was who it was – in a flirtatious voice, shifting a good deal of her weight against him. "I thought I just might find you and Revy here tonight..." She ran her fingers through his messy mop of hair. "Think we have time for a quickie behind the bar before she comes out from the bathroom or wherever she is?"

Rock either didn't notice her hands on him or didn't care, and simply shoved his glass back towards Bao, requesting another refill.

"Didn't see her come in," Bao supplied as he refilled Rock's glass. He knew that Eda could be just as much trouble as Revy, but since the two of them weren't in the same room together – and since Eda seemed to have something else occupying her thoughts other than wanton destruction, he tried to play it cool. "Kid showed up by himself. He keeps drinking like this, and he'll wipe me out of Irish Jack."

Eda peered at the bartender from over her sunglasses. "That so...?" she didn't seem to expect this. While making Rock blush was a reward unto itself, she got such a kick out of making Revy jealous every time she so much as touched her man, though she would always deny it. And she didn't seem to even be getting her usual blush out of the guy, much less a response.

Well, it wasn't often that Rock came to the Yellow Flag without his usual third wheel – or rather, without being third wheel to the purple haired gunslinger he always accompanied. In fact, this was the first time she had seen him anywhere unaccompanied by the legendary Two-Hands.

Eda's mouth turned into a grin as she ordered a margarita. If there was something going on between Rock and Revy that had him this bent out of shape over it, she wanted to know about it. And she had ways of finding out.

"Hey, big guy..." Eda crooned in the most big-sisterly voice she could manage, laying a supportive hand across his back, and patting him congenially. "What's eatin' ya?"

Rock finished off his latest portion, before leaning his arms on the bar.

"...You ever feel you need someone...like, if they're not there in your life, you just wouldn't be able to function...?" Rock said, slowly. He hadn't had enough to slur his voice, but he was taking his time. "But you can't ever tell them that, because most of the time, you just want to kill them?"

Eda blinked. Then she held up her finger for Bao to pour her another glass. She was going to need something stronger than a Margarita for this.

"Maybe you should start from the beginning..." Eda suggested, running her fingertip along the frosted rim of her margarita glass, licking the salt from her fingers every so often.

Rock rested his upper body against his arms. He still hadn't so much as made eye contact with her. Eda wondered just what had happened to put him in such a foul mood. He didn't look like he was hurt anywhere. And as much as guilt would have accounted for his behavior, she couldn't for a moment believe he had managed to hurt Revy in the slightest bit.

So what was it?

"This is one hell of a confessional," Rock managed a weak smile as he peered up at the ceiling fan above them, providing no cool whatsoever as it creaked about a dozen rotations per minute.

Eda lifted her glass. "You kidding? This is the best kind!" She laughed and sipped her drink, and
set it back down. "Lay your sins to bare, my son," she joked, patting him on the back hard enough to cause him to sputter. "Be welcome in the house of God!"

Rock groaned. So did Bao.

"Eda, don't go preaching that crap in here," he grudgingly refilled Rock's glass. "I don't want people coming here thinking they can get absolved."

Eda just giggled and Bao wondered how many bars she'd been to before this one.

"Oh, just make it a twofer," she sloshed her glass around. "You'll get more customers."

Bao grimaced. "Yeah…annoying ones."

Eda ignored him and draped her arm around Rock's shoulder.

"Rock, baby, if you don't wanna tell me, that's fine," she removed her glasses, slipping them between her breasts. "But maybe I can take your mind off of things for a while…"

This only seemed to annoy him. "That's the last thing I need right now…"

Eda's eyebrows rose. Usually, whiskey had a way of loosening a man's resolve, not tightening it. That, or she was seriously losing her charm. She ignored the nagging feeling in the back of her mind that told her she was getting old, and put on her most innocent smile.

"I read something about those pretty ladies you Japs have…geishas, or whatever?" Eda crossed her legs. "Sure, they were sometimes used as whores, but in the old days, they were, like, courtesans, right? That means, you paid them for their company, so you could talk to them, and they'd listen and be all nice to you and shit."

The sudden recall to his country of origin made Rock raise an eyebrow. "Are you going somewhere with this?"

Eda had long since finished her margarita and was slowly obliterating the Scotch Bao had set in front of her. Rock was on at least his sixth glass.

"My point is, having someone to talk to may be just what you need," Eda's face was unreadable, though she had a serious looking pout on her lips.

Rock finally managed to make eye contact with the faux nun. When he had first met her, he had thought he'd found Revy's long lost twin sister. She was loud, brash, obnoxious, vulgar and shameless. And damn it to hell if, just like Revy, she didn't also have the same smoking hot, dynamite figure that was outshone only by her skill with the Glock 17L she kept plainly strapped to her waist. Her eyes were blue, though. American born, though technically, so was Revy. He wondered if they'd ever known each other in their childhood. Thinking about Revy made his eyes hurt for a reason that he wanted to forget.

He stood up and left a few bills on the bar.

"Sure," Rock said, reaching for his keys. "But not here."

He felt her hand clench around his wrist in an undeniable…well, denial.

"You've had a lot tonight," she said, and to his surprise, her voice didn't sound in any way menacing or threatening, but genuinely protective. "I'll drive."
Eda had almost had enough by the time she parked the car. She had been willing to listen to Rock before, but it seemed once he got going, he just wouldn't shut up. And it wasn't even that interesting. He had gotten into a fight with Revy, as she'd suspected. Once again, he had stepped in to keep her from taking things too far, and then she went off on how sentimental he was. This time, however, her words had struck him somewhere deep. But he hadn't even hit her for it – he had only thought about hitting her. And it was just the fact that he had the thought that had driven him to the bar that night.

"I mean, it's not like we've never gotten into fistfights before..." Rock blurted, red faced. "But that was before, after I had just joined. We're supposed to be partners now...I'm not supposed to think things like that anymore..."

Eda groan as she put the car into gear and rested a hand on her head. "You're breaking my heart, Rock!"

Rock had his arms crossed. "Look, this may not seem like a big deal to you, but-"

Eda didn't let him finish. "Oh, for the love of...would you just shut up and admit that you're in love with the girl, already?"

Rock blinked. And blinked again.

"No. No, that can't be it. No way. There's no way I'm in love with her!"

"You totally are!" Eda insisted. "She's all you can talk about! You can't get her out of your mind, but sometimes you just want to kill her! The way you're babbling on about her, you sound just like you're her husband or something! Her pussy-whipped husband, at that!"

Rock had had just enough alcohol to need a second or two to process what she'd just said, and to give him the nerve to retort the way he did.

"Hey, fuck you – if anything, I'm more like her wife than her husband!"

Now it was Eda's turn to pause - which she did, before bursting out into laughter.

Rock smiled an idiotic drunken smile as he watched in amusement as Eda slammed her palms on the dashboard of the Lagoon Company's car.

"Oh-hohohoho..." she wiped tears from her eyes. "Oh, Rocky, they don't make them like you anymore!"

Rock was surprised to find himself laughing along with her. He was surprised by a good deal of his own behavior around the blonde woman this evening. It he didn't know better, he'd have said he was having a damn good time. Was it just the whisky?

"Well, this is your stop." Eda said, still smiling. "Do yourself a favor, and go get in on with Revy already, before that well runs dry!"

Rock peered out the car window, surprised to see that they had indeed pulled into the Lagoon Company building, at least, in its garage. He bristled at Eda's suggestion, however.

"No way! She'd murder me!"

Eda propped her elbow on the back of the driver's seat, and peered at him. There was enough light
from the city to see him by.

"Rock, you've been in Roanapur for what, six months? Eight? In that whole time, have you gotten it off even once?"

Rock's alcohol reddened face became noticeably redder. "Wh-what? No! I mean…that's none of your business!"

Eda wrinkled her nose. "Are you waiting for her to ask you or something? That girl's head is so far up her own cunt that she probably doesn't even know that you're interested!"

Rock pouted. He really wished she didn't talk about Revy that way.

"That doesn't mean I can just go…" he tapered off, losing his train of thought. The way she was leaning gave him a more than ample view down her tank top, and he reddened, looking away.

She only smiled. "You want some pointers?"

She had to stop herself from giggling at his reaction. He was like a schoolboy – so easy to take advantage of. The whole mess of possibilities that suddenly made themselves obvious in this situation made her tingle.

"I, uh…" he looked at his watch, but she wasn't about to let him get out of this.

"Look…” Eda said, in a maternal tone. "It's simple. Just kiss the girl, and she'll get the message. Then, knowing Revy, she'll take it from there. Honestly, it'll be that easy – she practically fucks herself."

She snickered again as Rock's face went beet red. She ought to right that one down.

"You…you act like it's just so easy…” Rock looked away, irritated.

"Of course it's easy!" Eda rolled her eyes. "Haven't you had a girlfriend in high school or something?"

Rock just pouted.

Eda blinked. "Seriously? Not a single girlfriend?"

Rock's eyebrow wrinkled. "Are you done humiliating me for the night?"

Eda held up her hands, abashed. "No, no, I'm not making fun! Just…wow, seriously? So you've never even kissed a girl before?"

Rock closed his eyes. "If you're quite finished, I-"

He didn't get to finish the thought, because there was a blue pair of eyes right in front of his face, and a pink set of lips pressed against his own.

Rock's voice caught in his throat and he tried to pull back, but Eda's arms were around his neck, pulling him in closer. He tried to get her to let go, but he couldn't put his hands anywhere that seemed decent, and she smelled like alcohol and cigarettes, and the fact that they were literally a stone's throw from Revy's bedroom…

His body became much more uncooperative when he felt Eda's tongue begin to prowl the inside of his mouth, and his brain overtaxed itself in simply attempting to keep track of its movement and the sensations it was bringing out, and her hands were on the collar of his shirt, holding him in
the sensations it was bringing out, and her hands were on the collar of his shirt, holding him in place while she devoured him, and damn it, this was wasn't right at all! This was Eda! This was Revy's friend! And Revy was sleep not a story over their heads! If the car so much creaked...

But damn it, he just couldn't stop kissing her! He should be terrified, but his blood was running hot, and his mind was swimming in a cesspool of emotions that he had long since lost control of that evening. Eda might have been right – maybe he really did have feelings for Revy. But if he went to Revy like this, and tried doing the things that Eda was doing to him...he would be dead. No question. Right now, he was not in his right mind, and his repressed emotions needed an outlet that Revy just wasn't going to provide. It was Eda who was providing him with that outlet, and as much as he may think otherwise, she was just what he needed right then.

By the time they parted for breath, Rock was as still (and as stiff) as his name would suggest, his eyes displaying only a blank, stunned expression that normally occupied the faces of the undead.

"Just like that," Eda said, not quite out of breath, but distracted, sounding like she was speaking out of self-defense, trying not to think about what she had just done. "Kiss her like that...and the deal is sealed..."

It took Rock a second to remember who she was even talking about. Revy? Who was that? All he could think about was how Eda's nimble tongue had invaded every corner of his mouth, about how powerless he'd been in her grasp as she had kissed him, his first kiss, and how desperately he wanted a second try.

"I...I have a confession to make..." Rock managed to get out of his quavering diaphragm.

Eda smiled, her sense of humor taking over. "Shall I find you a preacher?"

Rock shook his head. He was done playing games.

"I haven't sinned just yet...but I'd feel real awkward if there was a preacher here when I did..."

Eda's eyes widened in sudden amazement as Rock grabbed her by the shoulders, planting his lips onto hers with considerable fervor. His hands came up to draw her face against his own, and she found that she didn't mind letting him try to take the lead. He was no Casanova – he was awkward and bumbling, but damn did this kid have some enthusiasm!

Not one to be outdone, Eda lifted her legs out of the leg well and flipped herself unceremoniously on top of him, straddling his waist. He stumbled for a moment – like Revy, Eda had a strong set of legs, and he could feel their crushing force around his hips as she practically squeezed the life out of him, but her energy just made him want to push back even harder.

Her breasts filled his hands, and the sound she made when he squeezed her there was downright hypnotic. Her lips found their way to his earlobe, and he lost all motor control for the moment. He couldn't seem to remember where his shirt had gotten to, and was having a hard time remembering with Eda's fingertips scrawling up and down his chest like they were. His hands found their way to the fullness of her rump, her skirt having long since been hiked up to her hips, leaving only a thin pair of panties between his hands and her warmth, their color indistinguishable in the dim light, nor a matter of much concern at the moment.

She was all movement and muscle, sinew and skin. She coiled around him like a snake, pawed at him like a cat, and tickled his skin like a spider. Every part of her was doing something, from her fingernails with traced lines of fire across his chest, to her lips, which had fastened themselves to his collar bone, to her hips, which were undulating her entire body to grind against his. He couldn't think about what to do next, or whether or not he even should under the circumstances. He wanted to stop. He needed to keep going. Her skin tasted like salt and liquor. His hands found
their way beneath her panties, and Eda went rigid for the next several moments as he explored her, familiarizing himself with her wetness, her texture, curious and shy while she lay plastered against him, increasingly frequent and louder moans emanating from her throat with each questing digit.

"Rock!" she gasped, biting her lip as his finger found their way inside of her, prodding the confines of her warmth. He wondered how deep he could go, and each inch seemed to drive her more and more up the wall. She clawed at him, her feet pressed desperately against the radiator, every moment her mouth spent not wailing at his intrusion was occupied with the task of further familiarizing itself with his own mouth, as well as other parts of him that were in reach.

Her tank top was hoisted up, exposing her ample bosom to his kisses, his lips and teeth fastening over her tender pink nipples, eliciting further groans of pleasure. His fingers continued to work inside her until she could bear the teasing no longer and had managed to pry open his pants to let his arousal out into the open. She pushed her panties aside and maneuvered his length between her lips, before bringing her hips down to engulf him fully.

Rock's jaw nearly unhinged. Eda watched his face eagerly as she clamped her muscles down on his manhood, his eyes shut tightly as she massaged his length. Her smile was a twisted kind of lust, her eyes sparkling in a fascination that savored every moment of his torment, like watching a piece of parchment catch fire and burn to a crisp. His body – all of his body – was as rigid as a board, which was just the way she liked it. She felt his hands grasping blindly for her – one clasp hold of one of her unprotected breasts, the other settling around her face, and she obliged him further by wrapping her lips around his thumb, as she rotated her hips, lifting her body off of his, before crashing it down again to envelope him.

"Eda!" he gasped. He didn't want to think anymore. He didn't want to think about Revy or the Lagoon Company, or his old job, or all the death he'd seen. He didn't want to think about his arbitrary set of standards that he'd kept from his old life, or how many of them he was breaking by doing this. He didn't want to think about anything. All he wanted to do now was feel.

And Eda didn't leave much room for thought.

She could no longer keep her calm composure. She had enjoyed being in control, watching him squirm within her grasp. She had been able to stave off the barrage of pleasure that was building up like static electricity between the rubbing together of nervous flesh. But no longer. She cradled his face in hers and planted her lips to his. Her bountiful chest was billowing against his, cushioning the impact of their bodies colliding as she began to fuck him in earnest now, flexing and un-flexing her legs to lift off of him and dive back down. He stared back at her through lidded eyes, cheeks flushed red as he attempted to return her kisses, his hands full of her hips as he did he best to help lift her up and down.

She was grateful, for the bit of leverage he provided allowed her to relax her muscles and better accept his invasion into her recesses. Rock seemed to sense her relaxing, and begin to pump his hips up into her, sending her into a fit of screams muffled by the mouthful of his shirt that she had bitten down upon as her eyes clenched shut.

"Rrrrrrrrrng!" she wailed and her body turned to gelatin, an aqueous mass of pleasure and sensation that moved in accordance to a choreography that neither fully knew, but had been designed millennia beforehand. His hands more fully enveloped the soft globes of her ass to bounce her in time to his thrusts, as each pounding caused them both to take a sharp, truncated gasp of breath that began to rise in pitch with each consecutive strike of hip to hip.

"E…Eda…!" Rock gasped as he felt what little control that he had began to slip. She could barely hear him, her back arching to press her upper body limply against his own, her head cradled over his shoulder, her remaining strength focused entirely in her hips, undulating them as fast as she
could, tears streaming down her cheeks. Every time she lifted her body, he felt her clamp down on him as she drew up around him, before releasing her grip to slam her body back down and do it all over again. She moved so fast, so fluidly, and so damn forcefully that he could barely take it!

Suddenly, Eda threw back her whole body to drive her entire weight down onto him, her jaw hanging open in a long, drawn out holler of joy. Her entire body spasmed and Rock couldn't stop himself from reacting to the feeling of her abdominal muscles doing kegels with him inside of her, and he succumbed to her.

Both were clutching each other in heated throes of ecstasy and passion. Neither understood what had brought them here, or whether or why they should have even been doing this, but at that moment, neither cared. Rock simply emptied himself into her, and Eda just soaked him up like a parched desert flower, and wilted over him just as quickly.

It took them a while to catch their breath. Both were sweating and panting, and the heat of Roanapur wasn't helping. It hadn't occurred to them to lower a window, but for the sake of the Lagoon Company members who were sleeping in the building adjacent to the garage the two of them were in, it had probably been a good thing.

Rock's arms came up around Eda's shoulders and then her back, stroking gently and soothingly, and it took her a second to realize that he was actually cuddling her. Hell, it had been years since she'd been with anyone who's actually wanted to cuddle after sex! That Revy didn't know what she was missing!

Rock pressed his lips to the woman's ear. "Forgive me Sister, for I sinned…"

Eda, still warm and buzzing post-coitally, could only giggle in response. "How long has it been since you're last confession, my child?"

"Too long…" Rock stammered, tucking her head beneath his chest, letting her rest her head against his chest. "I'm afraid I've had…impure thoughts regarding a woman of the cloth…"

Eda chuckled, running a fingernail along one of his pectorals. "Oh? Just thoughts, my child?"

Rock tried to laugh back, but he was out of breath. "And perhaps some…impure deeds as well…"

Eda lifted herself over him, letting her long blonde hair curtain itself around her face as it hung over Rock's, and for a second, her brilliant blue eyes and full, supple lips were all he could see. Then she slowly descended upon him, her mouth taking its time with him, devouring and savoring the taste his own, a purr-like thrum sounding in her throat as his hands pressed against her back.

"You're forgiven, you bad boy…" She smirked, and then kissed him some more.

Next Chapter: Balalaika
Boris had known his boss for decades, and the last time he had seen her like this, they had been about to take on a group of armed Afghan Mujahideen. Balalaika was tapping her heel on the floor, the chewed remains of a slim cigar slowly disintegrating between her teeth. Her arms were crossed, and she couldn’t sit still. Boris was ex-KGB; he could sit calmly in a building as it was being shelled, he could hold a conversion in the midst of 50-caliber gunfire, and he could laugh in the face of anyone who thought they could torture him for information while they were attempting to do so. But seeing Balalaika like this was driving him downright insane.

“How honestly, Ma’am…” the second in command of the hotel Moscow buried his cigarette within the heap of its fallen companions in the ashtray. “I don’t think there’s any cause for concern. It’s not worth enough money for some thug to try to snatch it.”

Balalika dropped slowly and tiredly into a padded leather armchair, its red surface worn smooth from years of use, its buttons fraying to brown.

“When you say things like that,” she released a breath of smoke clouded air, “It feels like you’re simply inviting misfortune.”

Boris shrugged and lit up another cigarette, sitting across from her, his hefty frame a stark contrast from the lithe, coiled flesh streaked with scar tissue sitting opposite him. It would have been so easy for a woman with such scars to evoke pity or sympathy, to appear as little more than a crumpled heap of rags, wasted and torn by the flames of war. Instead, Balalaika wore her maroon business suit and skirt with all the poise and confidence of the mafia don she was. One look at her eyes, and no one would mistake her for anything but a killer, a hardened, sharpened instrument of dirty warfare and even dirtier politics and business management. She wouldn’t think twice about putting a bullet into the first face to cross her or her organization, nor would she hesitate to offer her own life or dignity, and that of every man in her organization, for the good of her country.

It was a serious life, a dangerous life. There was no room for sentimentality. Which may have accounted for why she was so antsy about the parcel that Rock was ferrying into the Hotel Moscow’s headquarters.

“Mister Okajima is here,” an attendant sounded from down the hall, and as she got to her feet, Balalaika could see the young man walking down the hallway towards her sitting room. He didn’t appear to have been interrupted in his journey, she noted with a sigh of relief, and with a gesture, Balalaika waved him in.

The Japanese businessman was carrying a relatively small wooden box in his hands, wrapped in brown paper and covered with stamps and address labels from what looked to be no less than a dozen countries. He looked professional as always, though he always had to make an effort to keep his composure around the Hotel Moscow (he absently wondered why a branch of the Russian mafia was named after a hotel – especially considering that the front company wasn’t even a hotel, but the Bougainvillea Trade Company). This was especially true after their job with the Washimine Group, and he and Balalaika had nearly come to blows. He was honestly unsure if
the lasting impression she had of him from the incident was one of reproach at having to stick her neck out for him, or one of respect for him standing up for his beliefs.

Either way, it didn’t take a negotiator of Rock’s caliber to tell that the head of the Hotel Moscow was especially tense regarding this particular parcel.

“This is the package you ordered…” Rock said cordially, offering up his burden.

Balalaika nodded and Boris took the wooden parcel, unsheathing a pocket knife to work the blade beneath the decades old wood, Balalaika watching with keen interest.

Seeing as his work was done, Rock stood up straight and bowed his head. “Well then…”

“Not so fast…” Balalaika’s voice was ice cold and deadly. Her breath came out as a hoarse whisper. “I’ve waited too long for this…if anything is missing or damaged…”

Rock felt the temperature of the room go down. They were going to hold him accountable, he realized. It was just Balalaika and Boris in the room with him, though there were another few men just down the hall. Still, either of them would be more than enough to take care of him. The car was parked outside, and the Roanapur heat penetrated what passed for air conditioning with ease enough to cause a sweat. But the sweat Rock was feeling was of a different sort, as he felt the two Russian’s eyes veer from him to the box Boris had just pried open.

He graciously offered the parcel to Balalaika, who peered inside amidst the cotton and burlap padding.

She nearly dropped the box.

As she reached inside with trembling hands to withdraw the item inside, Rock saw her expression transform from apprehension to fear to shock and then to disbelief. In her hands was a small brass pocket watch, with the soviet coat of arms imprinted on the front. As she turned it in her hands, she ran her fingers along the bumpy ridges, smoothed over time, spelling out a phrase carved into the back of the watch: Proletarii vsekh stran, soyedinaytes.

Balalaika had been standing – she had gotten to her feet upon Rock’s entrance, her edginess keeping her from relaxing. Now, she crumpled like a paper bag back into her chair. Her eyes disappeared behind her hair, and her whole body shook. She squeezed the pocket watch with enough force that Rock wasn’t sure that it wouldn’t bend under the strain. She didn’t cry. He couldn’t imagine her crying – Rock had to convince himself that she hadn’t been born into the world with that devilish smile on her face she always wore. But if there was a time in her life that she might have cried, this would have been it.

He expected Boris to be at her side, not comforting her exactly, but being there for her. Boris had been part of her team, from what he understood, and as far as Rock knew, would lay down his life for her. But to Rock’s surprise, he was standing by the wall, his arms crossed, and his eyes closed. It was as if he was trying to propagate the illusion that he wasn’t even there. Was this how he showed respect, Rock wondered? By pretending not to be there when his commanding officer needed to be alone?

If so, Rock realized, than it would be good manners to make himself scarce. He didn’t belong in this world, after all…

“I’ll be…uh…” he wasn’t sure whether to look at Boris, who wasn’t making eye contact, or Balalaika, whose body was heaving with suppressed gasps of rage - or maybe sadness. “I’ll just be going…”
Neither of the two of them said anything, though Boris opened one eye to look at Rock, and
giving him an acknowledging nod.

Rock made for the door, at a politely sedate pace, but with enough pep as to minimize the
awkwardness. He stopped at the door, however. He didn’t know why – every iota of his being
was telling him to get out before someone started killing things. He didn’t belong in their world.

But the look on her face…

“If…” Rock said, with his hand on the door. Balaika’s teeth were clenched so hard, there was a
trickle of blood running down her lip. “If there’s anything more the Lagoon Company can do for
you…you know where to find us.”

Boris made a curious face, but said nothing as he walked outside. He closed his eyes again, giving
his superior as much privacy as he was allowed. With all the tact of his Japanese upbringing, he
was glad Rock had sensed his intentions and made off as quickly as he had, though he wondered
what made the young man leave such a parting comment. Of course Balalaika knew how to reach
the Lagoon Company…was he simply being polite, or was that…genuine concern in his voice?

Rock passed the men at the door, who were playing cards and smoking cigarettes, without
incident. When he made it to the door to the outside, however, there came a loud, hollow scream.

"YEEEEEEEEEEEEAAAAAAARRRRRRRGH!"

Rock winced. It was a torturous shriek, a wail of agony and anger and confusion and sadness and
horror. It was the sound of pain, strength and all feeling leaving the body in the most forceful way
possible. It was the sound of decades of numbness and death subsiding and a lifetime of memories
and insanity resurfacing after being buried for decades.

It was a sound that Rock would never forget.

The two men playing cards did not look up from their game, but were silent, and remained staring
at their hands, neither of them concentrating on the game. Rock wanted to speak up, but it felt
almost sacrilegious to give voice to the suffering that the Queen of the Hotel Moscow was feeling.

Rock lit a cigarette. And he stepped outside.

“Is he still out there?”

Andre looked up from his cards and glanced out the window and saw the Japanese businessman
sitting on the porch, still smoking his cigarette. On the ground were scattered butts, though most of
them were probably from the Hotel Moscow’s own staff, but Rock had certainly made a
contribution.

“Yeah…” Andre muttered, taking another sip from the tumbler on the table. “Don’t know what
he’s trying to prove, sticking around here. And you can pull that card out of your sleeve, Yakov.”

The other, balding man made a face. “What are you talking about? You calling me a cheater?”

“No,” Andre sneered. “I’m calling you a liar and a cheater!”

Yakov smirked. “Oh, well that must be why your wife prefers my bed over yours.”

“You can have her, fuck-wad,” Andre flicked his cigarette butt at the bald man’s face, which
bounced harmlessly off his chin. “More time for me to spend with your sister.”
Yakov looked about ready to start a fight when Boris and Balalaika came marching down the hall, looking officious and stern.

“Men!” Boris barked. “Look alive!”

Everyone at the card table stood up. Yakov practically knocked over his chair. They knew just what sort of mood Balalaika had been in. Neither knew exactly what the parcel contained, but all knew that for their leader to be affected by such a trinket…

“Fall out, men,” Boris jerked his thumb at the door. “And send that Japanese businessman in on the way out.”

Andre and Yakov glanced back and forth, but did not hesitate further to comply with their orders. The occasional spat aside, they were first and foremost loyal to the Hotel Moscow, and they hurried outside past Rock as he sat watching the setting sun, who glanced up at them as they passed.

“Hey,” Andre tossed his head towards Rock. “They wanna speak with you.”

“You should have made tracks while you could, kid,” Yakov chuckled at the young man. “You’re dead meat now.”

Rock blinked twice, before getting up to watch the two men disappear down the street before turning around to reenter the building. He didn’t say a word as he faced down Boris and Balalaika, who fixed him with an appraising stare.

Rock knew enough not to say anything until he was spoken to. He hadn’t technically left their property, and so he had technically broken decorum by sticking around. He was worried that he may have offended them by butting in on their business…but he couldn’t help but feel some sympathy for whatever it was that pocket watch had meant to Balaika.

“Boris,” Balalaika exhaled a breath of smoke. “Why don’t you take the rest of the night off? I’d like a few words in private with Rock before I turn in.”

Balalaika’s second in command raised an eyebrow at that. “Ma’am…I don’t think-”

Whatever he had been about to say, he was interrupted when Balalaika seized him roughly by the collar.

“‘You don’t think…?’” she blew a breath of smoke into his face. “You don’t think what, Sergeant? You don’t think you should follow your commanding officer’s orders? You don’t think I know how to handle myself?”

Boris was not intimidated by Balalaika’s posturing. His hand came around her wrist, his face twisting with tightly held emotion. “Ma’am…you know where my concerns lie…”

Balalaika shoved him rudely towards the door. “And you have your orders. Now fall out!”

Boris pursed his lip, before throwing a glance at Rock, the meaning of which Rock could not immediately decipher. Boris then turned on his heel and marched out the door.

Rock still remained silent, though now he was slightly more confused as to his purpose here. He watched Balalaika, standing upright, his eyes remaining forward, glancing occasionally at the woman as she sucked on the fetid remains of a slim cigar – he idly hoped it was not the same cigar he had seen her teething on when he had arrived that afternoon.
“Let me start by apologizing for my earlier lapse in conduct,” Balalaika motioned for Rock to follow her into the drawing room she had previously been in. “Thank you for delivering that package to us. As you have no doubt been able to tell…it is of great significance to me.”

Rock said nothing as he was ushered into the sitting room. There was an array of chairs, some more comfy looking than others, as well as a sofa, all surrounding a coffee table. It was all old furniture, though not in a way that suggested quality. Everything there had been made in China to replicate other styles from various eastern European countries. It did, however, reflect on a time when things in life were simpler.

“Drink?” Balalaika offered, reaching for an already open flask of Vodka. Her voice sounded tired and unfocused, and the glasses already lining the table suggested that the bottle had very recently been much fuller.

But it was impolite to refuse.

“Please…” Rock nodded, accepting the tumbler and knocking back the hard liquor. He should have been terrified. He had seen her in a moment of weakness, and it wouldn’t be good for business for him to walk away. He was the newest member of the Lagoon Company, would be the least missed, and the debt she owed to the company was owed to Dutch, not to Rock. And here she was, inviting him into her house with drinks and polite conversation. Everything about this setup suggested that Balalaika meant to kill him. Then again, everything about Balalaika in general suggested that she was going to kill him. If he made a mistake now though, and said something out of turn, the chances of that happening could only increase.

“You’re not curious about the pocket watch?” Balalaika sat opposite him, peering at him from over her glass. Her eyes were that of an adder, her smile doing little to disguise the venom she kept within, though her ruby red lips easily allowed her to draw in her quarry, as did her devious gray irises.

“I am,” Rock confirmed, buying himself some time to think as he sipped form his drink. Her smile was downright captivating, and when she uncrossed and recrossed her legs, he choked on the harsh liquid in his throat. “But…ahem…it’s rude to ask questions about something so personal. It’s your choice what you tell me…but I would be grateful to know that my delivering this package has not upset you.”

Balalaika smiled. She was impressed. He was clearly terrified, and yet he kept his speech polite and to the point. If he hadn’t already been in the Lagoon Company’s employ, she would certainly have been after him to work for the Hotel Moscow.

She reached into her coat pocket and withdrew the pocket watch. She had already fastened it to a gold chain, and she let it hang on the chain before her, spinning gracefully as it swung like a pendulum before her.

“This belonged to my grandfather…” she muttered, lost in thought. “Throughout his lifetime, he’s been a soldier, a laborer, a family man, a convict, a hero, a traitor, and a leader…” Balalaika’s voice was bitter, heartfelt, frigid and aloof, and her eyes remained focused on the ornament. “He was the man who taught me everything worth knowing in the world. He was the source of my strength…my pride…and he gave…everything…to his country…”

Balalaika’s hands shook, and she wrapped her fingers around the watch’s brass frame. Though the chain was of gold, the watch itself was brass, the color of a steam liner’s gold finish. Its ticking days were over, and while a museum might have coveted it for its historical importance, it had probably only been worth a handful of change in its day.
“This would be easier if you were Dutch…” Balalaika took another cigar – Rock saw that there were several spent butts buried in the ashtray amongst the cigarettes, which allayed his earlier concern. “Though perhaps it’s best that he not be here tonight…he’s seen enough of my weakness already. No need for him to see any more.”

Rock was still studying the watch. Though his fear of death was slowly abating, his concern for Balalaika was rising to compensate. He had never seen her so thoroughly gripped by a memory. And while even he recognize that a very significant part of her existed in - and existed for the sake of - the past, she had always had a very firm grip on the present.

“Well, say something already…” Balalaika chewed her cigar more than actually smoking it, her scarred but otherwise flawless features marred by a knitting of eyebrows.

Rock turned his attention to the tumbler of vodka in his fingertips. It sloshed in circles, stirring viscously. The bottle had been sitting on the table all afternoon, and the drink had gotten unpleasantly warm, so he wasn’t inclined to go through more than one glass.

“Revy once told me…” he set his glass down and took out another cigarette. “The things we grow attached to have no more meaning than every other thing in this world. She told me that the meaning we give to things is completely arbitrary, that their meaning only exists in our heads…”

He sat forward, Balalaika looking at him through lidded eyes.

“The pocket watch isn’t really what’s important to you…” he said, eyes unreadable. “What’s important to you is your grandfather, and the memory you have of him. The object could be anything – an article of clothing, a pistol, a medallion – what matters is the memory they carry…”

Rock took a drag from his cigarette.

“The object itself has no memory - it’s only metal and clockwork after all. The memories are in your head…” Rock offered a polite smile. “They always have been. They were there before you even had the watch delivered. They’ll continue to be there for a long while afterward, even if you lose the object. Your memories don’t need a pocket watch to continue to exist. No matter what happens to it, you will remember…”

He picked up his glass and took another sip from the unpleasantly warm vodka.

“Which is why I felt bad that, by bringing it to you, I may have caused undue distress,” Rock said, and mustered a tired sigh. “I apologize for intruding on something so private…I hope you can forgive me.”

Balalaika’s smile was palpable. She stared across at him over steepled fingers, her cigar notched between middle and index finger, a wisp of smoking trailing from its end, her eyes focused on the man with a bored kind of interest. Rock couldn’t tell if his words had any effect on the mafia don, but if that smile was anything to go on…

“You’re pretty wise, Rock,” she said, leaning back and recrossing her legs – Rock’s cheeks always colored when she did that, she noticed with a smile. “The Lagoon Company’s lucky to have you. And so is Revy.”

Rock looked away, for the first time appearing off balance. If she was teasing, that meant that it was no longer vital to his survival that he remain composed, and so his resolve withered under the backlash of self-restrained emotion. “Um…thank you…but I’m not….she and I aren’t…like that…”

Balalaika’s eyebrow raised and she blew a puff of smoke across the table at him. “Oh? You mean,
after all these months, you and her haven’t…?”

Rock bit his lip, refusing to meet her gaze. He was starting to feel warm for some reason, and he hadn’t had nearly enough vodka to explain it away. He supposed, after intruding on her personal life such as he had, it was only fair that she pry into his. But did she have to keep dangling her heel at him the way she did? It was so damn distracting.

“Really…?” she sloshed her drink around. Despite the fact that the bottle was mostly empty, Balalaika’s face remained her usual guise of villainy and schadenfruede. The woman could hold her liquor, it seemed. Though there was something more…carnivorous about her smile tonight. She still wore her maroon dress suit, and contrary to marring her beauty, her scars gave her face a wild and exotic edge, her legs perfect as they hung poised within her skirt.

Rock swallowed visibly as Balalaika’s gaze trailed over him. He could practically feel her body heat now, her lilac perfume and the smell of cigars wafting over him, and he could feel his mouth going dry. He licked his lips to moisten them and he fixed his gaze on his glass.

“So…” Balalaika’s voice was like honey as she sat forward, taking another puff from her cigar, which she exhaled, enveloping him in smoke. “…In other words…you’re available…?”

Rock swallowed again, his mouth completely dry now. This conversation had gone somewhere very unexpected, very fast. “I should…probably be going…” he got shakily to his feet. “Thank you for the drink–”

His voice caught in his throat as he felt a strong hand – a very strong hand – take hold of his tie to hold him in place. He jerked and gasped suddenly as he found himself face to face with Balalaika, her face a mask of evil promises as she tugged him bodily towards her.

“I think what you should do, Rock…” she whispered huskily, “Is stay right…where…you…are…”

Her lips fastened hungrily to his own, her hot and sultry breath escaping from between the crevices of their lips in an exhalation of relief and animalistic deprivation. She wasn’t drunk – or rather, she was, but she had made better decisions while drunker than this. What she was actually was tired. She was a leader. She was a commander. She was strong. She was mighty. She was diligent, vigilant, and determined. She was cunning, conniving, and cutthroat. She was all these things, and to so many people, the combined whole of which mattered so much more than her conscience, her sanity, or her interests…

But right then, right there…

“Uh…” Rock was staring nervously up at the woman standing over him as she pushed him down on the sofa. “Balalaika…?”

“Go ahead…” she laughed, which came out more like a purr, and tugged the binding from her hair, letting it fall down in loose, draping locks. “Tell me to stop…” she lifted her leg and placed her high heel on the couch between his legs, her toe scraping the front of his pants. “I fucking dare you…”

Rock’s face was reddening, his heart thudding in his chest as he watched Balalaika shrug out of her dress coat, revealing an expensive looking white button-down beneath the off color scar running down her neckline.

“You, uh…” Rock shuddered under her lustful gaze, leaning back slowly. “You’re really not into giving a guy much of a warning…”
“I like a man who can keep on his toes…” Balalaika said, setting one knee just outside his own on the sofa, leaning forward to let her hair curtain around their faces. Her smile was vicious and heated, baring a wicked set of teeth as she descended upon him, grabbing a tuft of his hair in her fist, yanking his head back to expose his neck to her. In truth, she didn’t except much from him. She had been with rougher, more charming, and more masculine men than him. But that had been a lifetime ago. Now, she was the don of the Hotel Moscow. Now, she had a business to run. She couldn’t compromise her position by succumbing to those old desires. Not with her own men, not with any of the other men in power around Roanapur, not with any of the whorehouses, which were all invariably controlled by the aforementioned. The Lagoon Company, though…the Lagoon Company was safe. Not with Dutch though – he had seen too much of her already. Besides, the thought of bedding an American didn’t sit well with her, which ruled out Benny as well, who was taken besides.

But Rock…

“I see you’re aptly named…” she sneered, hand on his crotch. She felt his hands raking through her voluminous blond hair, and his lips grab ahold of her earlobe, which he bit down on and worked between his teeth. She hissed in pleasure – he was better than she’d expected – and hastily undid his pants. **Aptly named indeed**, she though, as she slid her hand into his pants to grab ahold of him, balls and all.

“Ugh!” Rock let out a gasp as she squeezed him, but not unpleasantly. She wrapped her fingers around his whole, working her nails in cruel, frantic circles around the back of his testes and taint, and she was rewarded with a loud moan of uncontrolled pleasure. He had no idea how he had wound up in this position. What had started as innocent curiosity had suddenly thrust him not only into Balalaika’s personal life, but into her boudoir as well. He hadn’t asked for this…but as unexpected (and as out of his comfort zone) as all this was, he was not about to stop it. She had made the likely result of such an attempt abundantly clear to him.

And so he endured her torment, enjoying her cunning fingertips as they delved into his most private areas and danced and taunted and prickled him until he was purple with anticipation. He chewed his lip, his erratic blood flow making him just crazy enough to think that he knew what he was doing, and he plunged forward, his lips fastened themselves to her neckline, her teeth and tongue tracing the line of her scar along her throat.

She paused as he tasted her burn. His mouth placed kisses all along her collarbone, sampling every inch of her marred flesh. Her ministrations slowed, as she felt him worshipping her ugliness. This was not the first partner she’d had since the explosion that had left the off-color flesh, but those had been brief tradeoffs with little kissing involved, and with a particular aim in mind, nothing but a quick release that was just as quickly wrapped up and swept under the carpet.

But this…? This was…affectionate. Tender, even. He was kissing her like he meant it, and kissing her scars! Those were her marks, her grief, her pride. Those were parts of her body that held more meaning than anything beneath her undergarments, and he was kissing them like they were something beautiful.

This was not what she had signed up for. Not for something this genuine. She was in this for the fun of it; this wasn’t supposed to have any heart to it. She doubted there would ever be an occasion in her life for such gestures. But Rock seemed to have the wrong idea about what she wanted. Maybe, she thought, it was time for him to be reminded of who was in control here…

She grabbed his wrists, pinning him to the sofa. Her smile was that of a cat’s as she held his wrists together in one hand, her other tugging off his tie.

“You’ll move when I tell you to…” she said with a vicious smile, licking her lips at his surprised
and reddened face as she unbuttoned his shirt, tip-toeing her nimble fingernails along his unprotected chest. He bit his lip to keep from letting out a gasp at the ticklish sensation of her nails on his skin, struggling uselessly against her grip.

“Ahhh…” his hot breath came out in a loud gasp as she undid his belt, widening the opening of his pants to allow his erection free. She wrapped her fingers around him, squeezing roughly, her index finger gently circling the underside of his tip.

Rock flinched in torment. He had obviously made some kind of wrong move, but she wasn’t letting him think, the way her fingertips drew lines of fire along his quavering man parts, the way her hot breath tickled his flesh as her teeth left small red welts along his ribcage, until finally her lips—god, those full, red, luscious lips—kissed the tip of his member almost sweetly, her nimble tongue snaking out to lick the bead of precum dripping from his aching flesh.

“Bala…laika…” his voice was lost amongst hot gasps of breath, his eyes squeezed shut.

“Do not call me that…” she hissed, her lips a malicious smile to put Revy’s to shame. “It ruins the mood. You will call me Vladilena…”

Rock absently wondered if that was her real name, but his through processes came to an irrefutable halt as those perfect lips of hers descended upon him and swallowed him whole, his flesh disappearing within her ruby red lips. He lost his mind within that moment, as every nerve within his manhood was subjected to the torturous ministrations of her writhing and talented tongue. His jaw dropped, his voice lost in a gasp that never quite made it out of his throat. He attempted to form the name she had instructed him to use, but his body wouldn’t cooperate, much less his mind. She still held his arms above his head—how was this woman so strong?—while her other continued to prod and massage and tickle every bit of flesh that was now swallowed up by vacuum of her lips.

“V…Vladilena!” he managed as he felt himself beginning to approach the edge with startling rapidity.

Suddenly, he felt one of her fingernails strike his testicles as if she’d flicked it, and color exploded in his eyes as stars danced, and for a confused moment, he couldn’t even register her lips parting from him.

As vision returned to his eyes, he saw Balalaika hovering over him, still pinning his arms over his head.

“Not…until…I say you can…” she wagged her finger in his face.

A stern but mischievous face smiled down at him, as she knee-walked over his body until she was straddling his face, her skirt hoisted up enough to reveal lacy violet panties hidden beneath black nylon stockings. She descended upon him, and her mound pressed against his lips. Her womanliness smothered his face and the darkness beneath her skirt made her scent overpowering as she rotated her hips, grinding her crotch against his mouth.

Her knees trapped his arms over his head, granting her hands the freedom to run the fingers of one through his hair, seizing a tuft to bury his face between her legs, the other reaching back to resume their torturous stroking between his own.

“Be a good little boy, Rock…” she scraped his scalp with her nails like she would a dog, the fingers of her other hand tightening around his balls. Her panties and stockings were already moist, and the menacing grip she had on his testicles made it impossible not to comply. He attempted to employ his mouth to satisfy her, but with most of her weight on him, it was difficult
to move. She seemed to sense this and shifted her weight, tugging his face out from between her legs for a much needed gasp of air.

“You giving up already, Rock?” her voice was mocking as she kept him erect with gentle, idle strokes to his member, but there was a hint of disappointment in her voice that made him worry, if not for his own safety, than at very least, for her respect. As Rock caught his breath, he measured his options. Balalaika was clearly a woman of a completely different caliber than him. He admired her – she was a powerful woman, and if tonight had proven anything, it was that she never did anything halfway, and she didn’t take no for an answer.

He managed a cocky smile. “Not a chance…”

Employing one of the moves from the three years of judo he had taken as a middle-schooler, he lifted his legs up to catch under her shoulders, and threw her onto her back. Her weight fell off of him and he used her moment to carry himself forward, sitting up, her legs flopping awkwardly over her body.

She let out a curse in Russian and grabbed at his legs. He felt her nails sink into his skin, but he ignored her protests. With deft action, he tore at her pantyhose, ripping them open at the seams, leaving nothing more than her dripping violet panties over her womanhood.

She recovered quickly, and with a feat of strength, wrapped her thighs around his neck, squeezing him in a chokehold. But by then, he had already pulled her panties aside and was licking her pussy. She was almost as horny as he was, and either unconsciously - because she was too far gone - or consciously - because secretly, she wanted to be overpowered - she loosened her grip. Not enough to appear as if she’d given up, but she could have easily rendered him unconscious from her position.

“You fucking prick!” she growled, her face contorted with rage and embarrassment, her shoulders and neck arching her head forward at an odd angle against the couch, her hair splayed out in a fan of disarray. “You think you can just…call the shots…?” her voice shook with something that was not mere remonstration. Her face was beet red, her eyes foggy with lust, and Rock saw just how much she wanted this and did not stop.

“What’s the matter, Vladilena?” His tongue found her nubbin easily in the swollen mess of her wetness, his fingers spreading her apart to attack her most tender regions. “You can dish it out, but you can’t take it?”

Her cheeks flared red as he used her name. “You…fucking…”

Whatever she was going to say next was lost in a howl of pleasure, and she twisted her head to sink her teeth into one of the couch pillows as she squirmed. Her grip with her thighs loosened almost completely as her body jerked under his tongue, her legs coiling up and spreading to allow him greater access. Her toes curled and uncurled, as her eyes clenched shut, her voice escaping as a tiny whimper through her teeth as she bit down on the pillow. “Rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrgh!”

She had wanted some fun, but this was not what she’d expected. Rock was supposed to be an easy, timid lay that she could toy with and manipulate as she willed. He wasn’t supposed to just… take the reigns like this and make her whimper like a dog! He ate at her like a savage, and god damn it, she was loving it! She could feel his arousal poking the back of her neck, and that just made it all the worse! Because she wanted to be taken advantage of. She wanted him to take control of her, wanted him to bend her over and just fuck her senseless.

As if he had read her thoughts, she felt her body lower to lie flat on the sofa, giving her no chance to try to fight back as he fell upon her like a hungry animal, pressing his lips to hers as she felt his
cock prodding at her tortured womanhood. She sighed in pleasure, tilting her head back unconsciously as he pressed his body to hers. She could feel him enter her, and she clasped her legs around his waist, welcoming his intrusion. She wasn’t going to fight it anymore…not right then, at least. She could exact her revenge later. But she so wanted to enjoy this…

Then he began to kiss her neckline again, and her eyes flew open. This again? His lips were on her scars, and the dynamic between the feel of his tongue against her softer flesh and as it passed the threshold of her scar tissue made her stomach turn summersaults. It was maddening!

“Not there!” she shouted, not caring how it made her sound. “Not there, you bastard!”

His hands were in her hair, and he enveloped her lips in a hungry kiss, which she was not able to fight. After what seemed like an eternity, he broke off the kiss and bit down on her earlobe, his hot breath coming out in a whisper.

“But Vladilena…they’re beautiful…” his breath tickling her ear. “Every part of you is beautiful…and I want to taste that beauty…”

He kissed her again and looked at her. She was shaking, and there was real fear in her eyes. “Please…”

He was stroking her untarnished cheek, his hips moving slowly, ever so slowly, keeping the color in her cheeks. “I don’t want to hurt you…but these scars are a part of you. They’re a part of what make you who you are. And that part of you deserves as much attention as the rest of you…”

His hand went to her other cheek. Her scarred cheek. And they came back moist. Tears were streaming down them at a frantic pace. Her eyes squeezed shut, and without thinking, his lips were on her face, kissing away each droplet as it ran down her discolored skin.

“Rock…” she breathed, her voice a ghost of a whisper. Her whole body was quavering, as her grip tightened around his torso. He began to move his hips again, his fingers working to unbutton her expensive blouse, his lips tracing once again down the scars of her neckline.

Her eyes flew open – the indescribable sensation of his lips on her scars driving her mad. “Rock!” she screamed, though her voice was like a flute blown too hard, broken and warbling. As his lips trailed down her collarbone, refusing to leave her marred flesh alone, her jaw began to hang loose, a trickle of saliva escaping, as her hips undulating with his. She began to thrust back, anxious and desperate for his intrusion.

He tugged off her violet bra, revealing the remainder of her offset skin as it trailed between the valley of her breasts. His lips and tongue traced their length, and Balalaika’s eyes rolled back into her head. Her nipples stood erect under the torment, and when his lips clasped around them, her fingernails buried themselves in his back.

“Fuck!” she cried, arching her back. “Rock!”

Her walls clamped around him, and he could feel her muscles massaging his length, his aching flesh eager for release. Unable to contain himself any longer, he brought his lips to hers again, kissing her with hunger and passion. He thrust into her one last time as his lips touched her earlobe to whisper her name.

Balalaika’s whole body shook, spasming as though under a seizure – a single violent jerk, following my a half second of paralysis, and then another jerk followed by more stillness, and again, and again. Rock bit his lip to keep from shouting, barely keeping a groan of pleasure contained as he expelled his essence, erupting inside of her while she lay twitching beneath him.
They lay gasping, panting, dripping with sweat, neither daring to (or perhaps capable of) making a move. A stillness gripped them as they lay in each other’s arms. To say that Balalaika was surprised would have been to understate the situation utterly. There was nothing – practically nothing – that went on in Roanapur that surprised her these days. For Rock not only to display such concern and kindness, to have the balls to accept her invitation, and then to completely turn the tables on her like this…

And to bring her to tears…

Rock was similarly surprised. He wasn’t sure what had come over him. Perhaps it was concern for his life…or for the relationship between Hotel Moscow and the Lagoon Company. Or for where he stood in her eyes. Part of it really had been genuine concern for Balalaika; at least, the part about her scars was. No one should be so ashamed of their body – least of all, someone whose blemishes made her so…sexy.

But if someone had asked him that morning if, hypothetically, he had found himself in Balalaika’s bed, if he would be daring enough to try to take the dominant role…he would have laughed.

The only question that remained, though, was what now?

He felt her fingertips caressing his back absently, and when he turned to look at her, there was a contented smile on her face. He kissed the corner of her lips, and she turned to capture his lips fully, her arms coming up around his neck to pull his face to hers for a long, possessive kiss.

When they parted, her wicked smile was back, and its mischievous glow that she had worn since the evening began hadn’t gone away.

“I hope I’ve allayed any lingering fears you have about you ruining my day…” she breathed huskily, and he felt goosebumps erupt all across his skin. He tried to return her smile, but it was tired. The workout had been exhausting, but the nervous energy had left him, and he was ready for a respite. But Balalaika, it seemed, was just getting started.

“Now, as for your insolent behavior…”

Before he could even raise his voice, she had him laying on his front, hips raised, arms pinned behind his back. He grunted in discomfort as she began to grope between his legs, her fingers casually molesting his testes, anus and taint.

Rock gasped, eyes wide as he turned his head to look back at her. “V-Vladilena!”

“Now, now…” her voice was like honey as she flicked his balls again, sending his vision spiraling. “You’ve lost that particular privilege…”

She gave his erection – for despite his exhaustion, her cavalier prodding had awakened desires in him he’d never known he’d had – a rude and painful squeeze, and he responding with the desired groan of pleasure.

“For the rest of the evening,” Balalaika licked her lips “You shall refer to me as ‘Mistress…”

A/N: Sorry about the title. It was too easy. This chapter turned out a lot longer than the first (and probably most of the others) because of how complex Balalaika’s character is. I wanted to make this at least a little believable, and someone like Balalaika needs a great deal more build up before a pairing becomes believable. The only other character that might come close is Roberta when I get to her.
Next Chapter: Shenhua
Rock was beginning to wonder what deity he had offended to wind up in some of the messes he had been finding himself in as of late. Through no fault of his own, he had been kidnapped not once, not twice, but three times over the last year. He had been on the wrong end of enough shootouts to fill multiple action movies, had nearly been blown up on several occasions, and had been punched and kicked and otherwise bludgeoned more times than he could count. And then there was that one incident with Revy and the male stripper. Rock honestly wished he could forget about that little experience.

So did the stripper.

This latest scuffle, on the sliding scale of the grand scheme of things, really wasn’t all that bad or unusual by comparison. But that didn’t make it any less terrifying.

“Get back here, you mother-fuckers!”

Rock ducked his head as the windshield of the stolen taxicab he was driving exploded in a hail of gunfire. He yanked on the wheel, sending the car careening down a narrow alley, screeching against the brick wall as the cars behind them swerved to remain in pursuit.

“Get stuffed, you bitches!” Shenhua was shouting from the passenger seat. She was not so much sitting in the passenger seat as she was standing on it, her long, slender leg completely exposed beneath her Chinese dress flapping in the wind to anyone who cared to see it (though, at the moment, Rock had other concerns), her upper body out the sunroof of the taxi, swinging her tethered kukri knives with an expertise that was difficult to comprehend to those on the receiving end. With almost no swinging room to either side, with the car packed into this tight alleyway like a sardine, she still managed to swing her blades with enough momentum and force to do some real damage to the Italian gangsters in the pursuing cars, though so far not enough to deter them. The fact that the mobsters had six vehicles to Rock and Shenhua’s one might have had something to do with it.

Rock gritted his teeth. This was supposed to have been an easy paying job. So easy, that all Shenhua had needed was a translator. Revy hadn’t exactly been thrilled when the Taiwanese hit-woman had shown up knocking on their door, looking for hired help. Dutch hadn’t been too pleased either – he had been planning to take the Black Lagoon out to the South China Sea for a heist, and needed Revy along for the added firepower.

That had been fine, Shenhua had explained. All she really needed was Rock’s historical expertise and linguistic abilities. Apparently, an entire container ship had gone “missing” on its voyage from South America and had beached itself not far from Roanapur. Shenhua had bribed a local fisherman for the tip, and had said she needed someone she could trust to help her go over the ledger for valuables before the authorities showed up to claim the stolen goods.

The valuable she had been searching for, as it turned out, had been some lost artifact from Renaissance Europe called the Pezzo del Eden, a bejeweled golden bauble with some kind of
religious significance. It had been passed (stolen) between the Medici and the Borgia families throughout the centuries, before being lost to history and then found again in some collector's trove in South America after some revolution or another had left the collector destitute and eventually deceased. The Colombian Cartel had been planning on fencing it, but before they could get their hands on it, some other party (most likely another collector) had arranged for a mix-up, and the **Pezzo** had ended up en route to Hong Kong on an unspecified container ship. Evidently, someone had found out about it, and made efforts to prevent the container ship from reaching its destination, but clearly had not planned far enough ahead to secure the artifact before the wreckage washed up on shore.

All this, Rock knew by the time they had uncovered the **Pezzo** amidst the litter of broken and decrepit shipping containers. He had pieced together enough news reports and looked up enough obscure articles to paint a coherent picture on the **Pezzo**'s origins and whom it belonged to. All Shenhua knew was that it was going to make a very rich mercenary out of anyone who knew a fence to sell it to.

Unfortunately, this fact was also well known to the Italian Mafia.

**BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!**

Rock swerved to avoid more bullet fire, slamming his foot down on the pedal. He cringed as he heard the rear windshield shatter some more, ears ringing. He was glad now that he had insisted on an alternative vehicle than the Lagoon Company Pontiac. For once, his paranoid nature seemed to be paying off. Otherwise, he would have had some explaining to do to Benny and Dutch if this so-called easy job had somehow resulted in this much damage to their car.

That was assuming he made it home at all.

“**HYAHHHHHHH!”** Shenhua let out a war-whoop as she hurled her knives at the pursuing car behind them. There was a satisfying sound of an exploding tire, as Shenhua’s aim struck true, causing the lead car to forcefully spin sideways in an alley that barely had room for a car facing forward, and crumpled and wedged into place, effectively blocking the cars behind.

“**Ha-HAH!”** Shenhua trilled, as she plopped down on the now significantly bullet-riddled passenger seat as Rock gripped the steering wheel with a petrified death grip, a look of sheer terror on his face.

“Did we lose them?” Rock demanded in a shaky voice, pulling out onto the main road. It was the dead of night, and there was enough traffic for them to blend in with the other taxis, but Rock wasn’t optimistic with their car in the shape it was in.

“For now, I think yes,” Shenhua said nonchalantly, wiping blood from her knives with a handkerchief. Apparently, one of her strikes had cut a little deeper than the chassis.

“Great!” Rock furrowed his brow. Now that the initial danger was over, he was left with a dangerously high level of adrenaline in his system, and he needed to vent. “Wasn’t this supposed to be an easy job?”

Shenhua put on her trademark smile. “What you talking about, Rock-man? This is easy job!”

“Easy?” Rock demanded. “Easy is dropping off munitions, or delivering information, or checking up on suppliers! Easy is going to a shipwrecked container ship and translating a Spanish registry! Easy…”

Rock swerved to avoid a motorcycle that had run a red light. The motorcyclist flipped him the
bird, and sped off. Rock wrinkled his nose and tried not to regret swerving.

“Easy is not being chased by mobsters who are after an age-old family heirloom – a family heirloom that we just so happened to have stolen!”

Shenhua waved a hand. “Oh, don’t be so tense, Rock-man! Twinkie was right – you way too pent up!”

Rock didn’t have time to ask who “Twinkie” was supposed to be, because out of nowhere, bullets began flying again.

BLAM! BLAM!

“Shit!” he hissed, pulling a U-turn into on-coming traffic, as multiple cars swerved by him, horns blaring. The taxi’s distinct lack of front or rear windshield must have given them away. Rock managed to catch a glimpse of the mobsters’ car that drove past them, with at least four guys hanging out of the windows, with handguns pointed at Rock and Shenhua’s stolen taxi.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

“Come on, Rock-man!” Shenhua hollered, grabbing hold of the armrests for support as the car rocked and swerved. “I thought you said you were good driver!”

“Well, excuse me!” Rock said, hurriedly changing lanes while simultaneously dodging bullet-fire. “I don’t exactly –” he yanked the wheel to the side, pulling the car into another side street. “ – have time – ” he slammed on the breaks, and swerved nimbly into parking garage, and immediately shut off the engine and the lights. “ – to observe the rules of the road!”

The car shuddered as the engine ground to a halt, and a deceptive stillness overtook the occupants.

Shenhua, her eyes perpetually narrowed, pouted her lips. “Great! Now we trapped!”

Rock didn’t answer. He scanned the gap between the wall and ceiling of the parking garage, searching for the chase cars. He found them eventually, circling the block, searching the area. He smiled and withdrew his cell phone, and quickly typed a number in.

“Hey!” Shenhua huffed, evidently not fond of being ignored. “You listening to me? I talking to you!”

Rock put the phone to his ear.

One ring…

Two rings…

“Rock-man!” Shenhua yelled into his ear. The cars outside seemed to have figured out their location, and were starting to set up a perimeter, effectively sealing them inside.

“Rock?” Benny’s voice sounded over the phone.

Finally, an answer!

“Benny,” Rock answered with a calmness that belied the situation they were in. “Are you busy? I need a favor.”

There was a pause on the other line in which Rock could vaguely make out the sound of Revy, cursing her lungs out.
“Depends…” Benny said, sounding weary. “Is this favor necessary to keep you alive?”

“That,” Rock said, “Plus, it should earn us a hefty finder’s fee on a fourteenth century museum piece.”

This seemed to pique Benny’s interest. “Really? Well, in that case, what do you need?”

Rock smiled. Outside the garage, the Italian mobsters looked like they were preparing to storm the garage.

“I need our old friend Abrego to ‘intercept’ a phone call from the Italian Mafia.”

Benny seemed puzzled by this. Rock could hear more swearing coming from Revy on the other line. There was a muffled sound of an explosion.

“I could manage that,” Benny said, finally, as if he had been listening in on the Mafia’s phone lines to determine what was being said. “I take it that job with Shenhua didn’t go as smoothly as planned?”

“Let’s just say that it’s a good thing I didn’t take the Pontiac.”

He hung up, with Shenhua giving him a good hard stare – or as much of a stare as a woman could give when her eyes might as well have been closed.

“What that all about?”

Rock smiled cockily. “Just securing a way out of here. But you’ve got to buy us a few minutes. Think you can manage that?”

Shenhua drew her kukri knives, and grinned a vicious grin that Rock had only ever seen matched by Revy herself.

“Would be my pleasure, Rock-man!”

What followed next was a display of barbarism matched only by the sheer level of acrobatics and agility Rock had ever seen. In a single move, Shenhua dove out of the garage over the wall, landing and rolling in a row of scraggily grass. She let loose with her knives, sending them hurling at the end of their tethers across the rows of mobster’s lining up to take the garage by storm, slicing into them like sausages. They fired back, and Shenhua cartwheeled, back-flipped, and grabbed the ledge of the second tier of the garage, and single-handedly flung herself up and over the wall on the second level. She sent a hail of throwing knives as she darted down the length of the garage, using the wall as cover, sending hit men ducking for safety, some of them with knife handles protruding from their eyes and necks. By the time the mobsters managed to get behind the cover of their cars, more than half of them were dead or bleeding out.

But by then, they started bringing in the heavy artillery.

“Shenhua! Take cover!” Rock shouted, hoping she could hear him, when he saw one of the mobsters produce an RPG launcher. He was still hiding behind the mess that was their stolen taxicab, the *Pezzo* wrapped up in a small burlap sack in his lap when the launcher went off.

BOOM!

He didn’t have time to shout again, as the grenade hit the side of the garage, and Rock slammed his hands over his ears to protect his eardrums from the force of the blast. He fell onto his side
from the shock wave, the package rolling off to the side.

When the smoke began to clear, he got blinkingly to his hands and knees, fumbling for the artifact, coughing for breath.

“Shenhua…” He choked, praying that she was still alive.

“You idiot!” he heard a familiar voice shout accusingly.

Rock blinked at a pair of red heels in front of him, as he looked up, half stunned, half relieved to see Shenhua standing over him, the burlap satchel in one hand, a trickle of blood running down the side of her face.

“You almost lost the package!” Shenhua nagged, completely ignoring the fact that she had just survived an explosion. “What wrong with you?”

Rock sat back on his haunches, catching his breath. “I’m just…glad you’re alive…”

Shenhua’s expression softened and she went over to crouch next to him, though that was most likely to hide from the mobsters as the dust began to settle.

“You big dummy, you know that?” Shenhua said, admonishingly.

“So I’m told,” Rock said, opening the door to the taxi they had stolen. He could hear shouting outside, but he wasn’t worried. The grenade that had been supposed to drive them out had effectively made it impossible for their assailants to enter unimpeded.

Shenhua looked somewhat confused as he got on his hands and knees and reached beneath the wheel to begin fiddling with the wiring and pedals.

“So why you need Colombian Cartel to listen in on Italian Mafia?”

Rock smiled as he worked on the taxi’s electrical system, disconnecting here and reconnecting there. “Because…the artifact we’re trying to steal has been stolen and stolen back by the Borgia and the Medici – that is to say, the Spanish and Italians – for half a millennia. Both sides see themselves as the artifact’s rightful owners. It’s a matter of national pride, if not family honor by this point. So if a group from Colombia were to learn that the Italian Mafia was trying to steal this artifact from, say, a container ship en route from South America…”

Shenhua’s mouth opened. “Ohhhhhhh…I get it now. So when do our friends arrive?”

Rock wiped the sweat off his brow. “Considering the value of the Pezzo, they should be getting here right about…”

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

There was a sudden sound of gunfire, and a hail of angry shouts and curses in both Italian and Spanish, as their assailants suddenly found themselves under attack by an angry group of drug traffickers.

“Well, that’s our cue,” Rock said, getting to his feet.

“Wait a minute,” Shenhua followed him. “How we supposed to get out of here? The way is still blocked.”

Rock shifted the car into neutral a stood up, gesturing to the vehicle. “Give me a hand?”
After some careful maneuvering, and a lot of grunting on Rock’s part as he pushed from outside, they managed to nose the car towards the exit, while the shooting continued outside.

“You sure this will work?” Shenhua asked, getting out of the driver’s seat, bullets still flying outside.

“One way to find out…” Rock grunted before he started the engine and shifted the car into gear, and dove for cover.

The taxicab took off like a rocket out of the garage, its accelerator stuck to the floor. It grazed most of its right fender off as it careened through the narrow exit ramp, causing it to tail-spin just enough – Rock silently thanked the Gods - to send it careening down the street, nearly taking out a trio of mobsters huddled behind a car of their own as they exchanged fire with the Colombian Cartel. With a flurry of shouts and cusses, the two groups raced to their cars, and took off after the runaway taxicab.

Rock and Shenhua strolled leisurely out the back of the garage, smug smiles on their faces.

“Not bad, Rock-man,” Shenhua giggled, the package under her arm.

“Yep,” Rock said, wiping his hands as he lit up a cigarette. “You feel up for a drink? I’m buying.”

It was 2 AM at the Yellow Flag bar. The Pezzo del Eden was safely tucked away in a secret storage container somewhere within Roanapur, and Rock and Shenhua were well and truly drunk, both of them laughing and patting each other on the back, exuberant at the thrill and adrenaline rush of a near death experience on top of the satisfaction that comes with ripping off not one, but two organized crime syndicates, a hefty wad of cash as recompense, as well as the overall feeling of a job well done.

“Twinkie was right about you, Rock-man!” Shenhua was giggling and red-faced. Most of the clientele was either packing it up, or upstairs taking care of one form of business or another, but Rock and Shenhua were still on an open tab. “You really handy in a pinch!”

Rock snickered, pouring the woman another glass, seeing as she was empty. “Ehehe…well, what I lack in gun-slinging skills, I make up for with white collar experience. There’s not much demand for it here in this town, but when it’s needed, it’s really needed. Whether it’s a high brow office building or shady crime tradeoff, the business world is cut-throat, no matter where you are in it…”

Shenhua was still giggling. “That true…I never really thought you were cut out for this kind of work, but I guess Japanese business world not so much better than we are, huh?”

Rock sloshed his glass around, wondering if he was up for another round. “No, not really…the hierarchy, the posturing, and regimented procedure…when you get past the details, it’s all there, and serves the same purpose, no matter who you work for…”

He connected some dots in his head, probably a bit slower than he really should have, and scratched his nose.

“Hey, what do you mean by ‘Twinkie’ anyway?”

Shenhua blinked in surprise. “What? You never heard of ‘Twinkie?’ Yellow on the outside, white on the inside?”

Rock had been in the middle of knocking back the last of his drink, which promptly ended up on the floor as he spit it up in laughter.
“Puhhhhhhh! Puh! Gack! Agh…” Rock spattered, wiping his mouth, eyes watering. “Revy? You mean *that’s* your nickname for Revy?”

Shenhua giggled playfully. “Yeah! Come on, you mean you never heard that before?”

“Can’t say I have…” Rock wiped his eyes. Or tried to, as he was still busy laughing liquor through his nose, which stung like a bitch and made his eyes water more. “And what’s her nickname for you?”

Shenhua turned her nose up. “Something stupid.”

Rock could guess, knowing Revy’s personality. But he didn’t want to offend the girl, particularly when they were both having such a good time, having just finished what had looked to be a doomed mission more or less by their own mettle, and of course the fact that he knew that Shenhua could and would flay him alive if he got on her bad side. The booze was also making it difficult to string two thoughts together.

“I’m trying to think of a good nickname that encompasses just how deadly and beautiful you are,” he scratched his head sheepishly. “But nothing’s coming to mind.”

Shenhua fixed the Japanese businessman with an odd gaze. “You high or something? Twinkie would never give me a nickname like *that*!”

Rock slid his glass back and forth over the bar, eying it distractedly.

“No, maybe not…” he said, not making eye contact. “But I would…”

Rock regretted the words the instant they came out. He must have really been drunk, he thought in retrospect. In his effort not to offend her, Rock had gone full steam in the other direction. If a lamer pickup line had ever escaped Rock’s lips, he could not bring such memory to mind.

Shenhua raised an eyebrow. “You trying to flirt with me, Rock-man?”

Rock let out a nervous laugh, trying to backpedal. “Heheh…well, uh…actually, I don’t know what I was trying to do…”

Rock paid very close attention to the streaks of condensation his glass had left on the chipped lacquered wood of the bar, anything to avoid meeting Shenhua’s gaze that still somehow managed to intimidate him despite barely showing her eyes. It didn’t help that she was still wearing her Chinese dress, which showed off one of her legs in its entirety. It was like the dress didn’t even try to hide the flawless curve of her calf and thigh, and she made no effort to assist the dress for its lack of trying. He knew she could take on any man in this bar, and that made her intimidating, fearsome, dangerous…

And damn it if Rock didn’t find that sexy as hell.

Shenhua didn’t change her expression, didn’t appear to reach any conclusion or connect any dots. She just smiled and said, “You way too pent up, Rock-man. Come with me now, yes?”

She had thrown back the last of her drink and was dragging Rock upstairs before he even had a chance to offer a protest or even an inquiry, her red heels clacking on the stairs as he was dragged insistently along.

“Hey….” Rock uttered, too drunk to offer up much resistance, wobbling and relying more on her grip to keep him steady than his own feet. “What are you…?”
She pushed a door open with a forceful shove, and practically strutted into the room. It was mercifully vacant, the bed made up. Lord knew how clean the sheets were, but at the moment, Rock could only focus on the way Shenhua’s hips moved back and forth in her tight red cheongsam. When she slipped out of her white coat and hung it on one end of the bed, leaving her milk-white shoulders bare, however, Rock began to feel blood rushing to his face.

“Uhh…Shenhua?” he muttered, blinking nervously. “What are you…doing…?”

She smirked at him, batting her eyelashes playfully. “Oh, come on, Rock-man! Don’t act like you weren’t eying me up all night long…”

Rock gulped as she stepped towards him. He straightened his back, managing to take a single step back, before she laid her arms over his shoulders, their bodies so close now, he could smell the alcohol on her breath. But it was mixed with the smell of lilacs, probably from her shampoo, as her bountiful hair draped over her shoulder as she leaned in close to whisper into his ear.

“So how ‘bout it, Rock-man…?” she purred, letting her breath tickle his ear. “You were pretty awesome tonight. I gonna be a rich little lady thanks to you. I say that deserves a little extra reward…”

Her hand snaked around the back of his neck, her long red nails tickling the hairs on his skin, making him shiver all over. He felt her exhale, her warm moist breath heating his face as her lips hovered over his own, inviting him, daring him to move.

“Don’t you think?” she asked, seductively.

The only thing holding Rock back – and he was holding back; all the alcohol in his system and proximity to Shenhua’s warmth and scent was making it very difficult not to give into temptation – was the fear that the Taiwanese mercenary’s idea of a good time might include a good number of torture techniques disavowed by most respectable governments. Then again, she did seem fairly interested, and disappointing a woman like Shenhua, who demonstrably knew more ways to cut a man open with or without the use of her kukri knives than most surgeons, might prove to be more detrimental to his health than undergoing whatever wicked practice Shenhua had in mind for him.

Rock gulped. Offered a weak smile. And made a short, silent prayer for mercy as he leaned forward, letting Shenhua’s dampened lips press against his own.

Shenhua responded by shoving him forcefully backwards until he hit the far wall, causing him to let out a grunt of discomfort. The air flew out of his lungs, and she quickly silenced him with her lips once more, taking hold of his tie and forcing him forward to meet her lips more fully.

Rock’s eyes flew open as she attacked him. Her kiss was insistent and commanded his full attention as her tongue slid its way between his lips, and he was assaulted with the taste of alcohol and lotus blossoms. She uttered a carnal purr as she coiled against him, her leg rising and snaking up around his waist, her fingertips still teasing the hairs on the back of his neck.

Rock wasn’t sure where to put his hands, and all of the attention she was giving him made it impossible to concentrate. Finally he resolved to lower his hands to her hips, reaching to gently wrap around her both cheeks of her ass, the tightly corded muscle beneath his grip like solid iron wrapped in layers of silk.

“Ooooh…” Shenhua cooed, wrapping his tie around her fist, securing him firmly within her grip. “You an ass man, Rock?”

Rock bit his lip as he met her gaze, her heated cheeks and come-hither eyes beckoning him for
more.

“Do I have to pick just one thing?” he offered weakly, his own eyes pleading for mercy. “There’s just so much to choose from…”

“Smooth talker,” Shenhua smirked, leaning forward to peck his lips. “Let’s see how long you can keep that up…”

She withdrew her hand from around his neck, and began to trail it in slow, sumptuous circles down his chest. Each button she encountered, her fingertip darted between the gaps of his shirt to trace hot red lines across his skin with her fingernails, causing him to let out a sudden gasp of air with each tantalizing flick, and by the third and fourth teasing motion, he was practically squirming, and Shenhua was giggling with excitement.

“Oh my, Rock-man…you so sensitive…” she said, half-jokingly as she continued prod every inch of his chest that she could reach through his shirt, before finally growing tired of the barest of touches and practically ripped his shirt open with her bare hands.

“H-Hey!” Rock let out a gasp of alarm as most of his shirt buttons snapped off.

“Shhhh…” Shenhua shushed him, touching a finger to his lips, his tie still bound around her fist. “Quit your complaining, Rock-man…you just let me work now…”

As she touched his lips, her own lips descend to his open skin, the tip of her tongue dabbing at one of his nipples, encircling it, and then flicking up and down to stiffen him fully. By the time she got to work on the other, Rock’s eyes were already clenched shut, his voice escaping in a tortured moan.

“That’s it, Rock-man…” Shenhua purred as she released his hold on his tie, letting her lips and fingertips trail across his chest. “Just let me take care of you…”

Rock clenched his fists as Shenhua ran the sharp points of her nails in cruel circles around damp and stiffening bits of flesh, before drawing her fingertips in playful lines down his abdomen, causing his whole body to shake. She kept her eyes on him as he cringed beneath her touch, her fingertips finding their way between his legs to rub the taut bulge in his pants, her lips curved into a wicked smile as she seemed to drink in every tortured gasp of air he released.

“You so fun to play with…” she cooed, running her fingertips in a playful circle over his swollen bulge.

Rock would have long since fallen over without the presence of the wall at his back. “Ahhh…I’m so glad you’re having fun…”

Shenhua smirked back up at him as she began to pull down his zipper.

“You no comedian, Rock-man,” she chastised, reaching into his pants to withdraw his aching member. “Don’t quit your day job, huh?”

Rock would have retorted, but Shenhua had chosen that moment to crouch down in front of him and wrap her fingers around his shaft and rub her thumb around the underside of his head, bringing him to full attention in the blink of an eye. She kept squeezing him, her ministrations slow, methodical and unrelenting as Rock began to squirm from overstimulation.

“Sh-Shenhua!” he gasped out loud, his hips clenching together as the Taiwanese temptress massaged his shaft.
The raven haired woman licked her lips decadently, watching him quiver from her expert touches, swelling purple within her lithe, dexterous hands. Her free hand continued to tiptoe its way across his bare abdomen, sending flickers of pleasure through his body, each one surmounting the next, her featherlight touches bringing him closer and closer to the edge.

“You gonna come for me already, Rock-man?” Shenhua teased, sensing his proximity, slowing her pace. “I hope you can hang on for just a little bit longer…”

Rock bit his lip, worried that he might just lose it at that. Shenhua’s spurious motions were targeted and precise as she relentlessly tortured his cock one-handed. Her off-hand was now running across the inside of his pant leg, scribbling her fingers across his inner thigh, tickling and teasing him further, unceasing in her torment.

She smiled, stroking her hair back across her ear as she looked up at him, clenching and straining in pleasure as she worked him over, massaging his shaft and deftly teasing his tip with the fat of her thumb. Her ruby red lips curved in delight as she watched him squirm within her grasp, completely helpless in her midst. He was entirely at her mercy at that moment, and that thought filled her with such delicious pleasure.

“Okay, Rock-man…” she cooed, before leaning forward to place her lips around his aching length. “You come all you want for me now…”

Her lips enveloped him, and he felt her tongue dart its way over the area her thumb had been attacking so mercilessly a mere heartbeat before, and Rock nearly lost his mind.

“HNNNNNG…” he grunted in ecstasy. “SHENHUA!

His legs nearly gave out beneath him as he released his load, capsizing in a swirling cascade of pleasure that left him absolutely breathless as she sucked him dry. Shenhua kept him in her mouth for what must have been a solid minute after that, gently tonguing him and massaging him with her lips until all stiffness left him and every last drop was spent. Only then did she part with him, and he was granted a moment’s respite.

“I…Jeez, I…” Rock gasped out, completely at a loss for words, and feeling rather woozy all of the sudden. “Fucking…damn…”

Shenhua placed a surprisingly tender kiss on his lower abdomen, right below his navel. “Not bad, Rock-man. You held out for a while there…but everyone give up eventually…”

Rock blinked, still drowning in post coital fugue, as he slid down against the wall to land unceremoniously on his backside.

Shenhua smirked and rose to her feet, gently dabbing her lips.

“Now then…” Shenhua giggled menacingly. “You ready to get to work?”

Rock’s half lidded eyes rose in confusion. “Huh?”

Shenhua sat back on the springy, unkempt mattress, crossing her legs to dangle one of her resplendent red heels in his direction.

“This not a charity service, Rock-man,” she smiled knowingly, eyes lidded like a cat’s as she uncrossed her legs, her red dress parting to reveal a pair of white fundoshi panties. “Come and give Shenhua a little something-something, yeah?”

Rock blinked again, trying to figure out what he was hearing through her odd accent and
mannerisms. Through his drink-addled and sex-fogged mind, he was able to determine that she was expecting a little reciprocation for her handiwork. Rock would ordinarily have no problem with this, but having just been blown to within an inch of his life, not to mention having downed a significant amount of liquor after a long night’s adventure, he was not entirely sure he was equal to the task.

Still, it would not be a good idea to turn her down.

“Alright Shenhua…” he offered, slowly managing to climb to one knee. “Alright…just give me a second here…”

Before he could blink, she had seized him by the tie once again, dragging him forward, sending him sprawling onto his hands and knees, his face landing somewhere between her legs.

“I done waiting, Rock-man,” she grinned through clenched teeth, a mad smile on her face. “Now get to work if you know what’s good for you!”

With that, she shifted to one side, before lifting her bare leg straight up in the air, tugging his tie behind where she was sitting, before bringing her leg down on to rest on his shoulder, tugging his tie under her dress and behind her back, pulling it between her legs, forcing his face squarely into her panties.

Rock let out a gasp of air, which was immediately stifled as her grip on his necktie constricted around his windpipe as she forced his face into her mound. All the excitement must have been really getting to her too, because she was warm and moist even through her fundoshi. He gripped the edge of the bed, unable to so much as stand with her leg resting on his back.

“C’mon, Rock-man,” she jeered, easing her grip just a little as she reached down to tug her panties down her legs, revealing a sparse field of ebony atop a moist pair of flower petals. “Show me what you got!”

Her sex now exposed, she tugged his necktie again, practically smothering him with her sultry warmth, her leg gently wrapping around his neck to hold him in place. He resisted at first, panicking from the lack of air, until he managed to position his face so that his nose could capture just enough air to not pass out. The air was thick with her scent, however, and paired with the way her hips moved against him, urging him onward, it was enough to encourage him to set himself to the task of pleasuring her.

Shenhua reacted immediately as his tongue darted out to sample her, delving in between her folds and quickly locating the tiny rosebud within. Shenhua kept her grip on his tie in one hand, while her other began to stroke and curl its way through his hair as he worked on her, seizing a tuft here and there as his tongue found a particularly sumptuous spot.

“Oooooooh, now that’s more like it!” Shenhua cooed in appreciation, undulating her hips as he devoured her, his tongue finding its way into her tender nethers.

He adopted a slow, rhythmic motion that caused her to seize and convulse, releasing panting breaths in quickening succession. Her nails began to dig into his scalp as he began to bring her closer and closer, her grip on his tie loosening of its own volition now as her muscles began to slacken.

Seizing his newfound mobility, Rock wrapped his arms around her thighs, hoisting her more fully onto the bed. Shenhua did not resist, crossing her ankles across his back, releasing her grip on his tie and hair to raise her arms over her head, grasping hold of the bed sheets as she began to bite her lip.
“Mmmmmmmmm…you got some moves, Rock-man…” she giggled resplendently. “Not bad…”

Her face turned carnivorous, however, as she reached down to grab him once again by the tie.

“Now come up here and get some, big man…” she smiled devilishly, inviting him closer.

She didn’t exactly give him much of a choice in the matter as she yanked his face to hers by his tie, causing him to sprawl overtop of her, catching himself with both arms on the mattress over her shoulders. He was left staring into a sadistic pair of eyes, a wicked catlike grin on her face as she held him there, the scent of cigarettes and alcohol on her breath as she kissed him. The predatory look in her eyes was so intimidating that Rock barely even noticed her hand encircling his shaft to guide his stiffening member between her legs. He did notice, however, when he felt himself encased within her moist enclosure as she clamped down upon him with a vice-like grip.

His jaw dropped as she began to work her muscles around him, massaging his shaft with all the physical expertise of a yoga master. He tried to match her pace, but the intensity with which she rocked her hips was nearly mind blowing, and her grip on his tie kept his face right where she wanted him, allowing her to watch his every convulsing expression as he squirmed within her grasp.

Finally, he just gave in and began rocking his hips as best as he could. Sweat was already streaming down his back as he balanced precariously over her, his hips undulating to plunge his aching cock into her over and over again. His eyes were clenched, and he was panting for breath, all but exhausted from the workout, but he kept his pace steady, thrusting his hips in quick, rapid succession. Finally Shenhua let out a sound that seemed to indicate that she was enjoying this as much as he was.

“Ooooooh…Rock…” she purred, seeming to forget the diminutive nickname she had chosen for him. “That’s goooooood…that’s reeeeeeal gooood…”

Rock did not stop, taking a page out of her own playbook by maintaining that single repetitive action at a steady and rhythmic pace. She seemed to have slowed her own pace to match his, her own enjoyment seeming to trump any need she had to maintain her dominance. After a bit of trial and error, he had found the perfect motion and the perfect pace to bring about the greatest reaction, and before he knew it, she was clawing at his shoulders as her back arched in pleasure, her eyes flying open wider than he had ever seen them.

“Ahhhhhhh…Roooooooock!” she screamed. “That’s…that’s…I’m gonna… Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Rock felt her tightening around him yet again, her kegel muscles gripping him so fiercely that he nearly collapsed on top of her right then and there. With one last thrust, he felt himself succumbing to her ministrations once again, releasing another load in a blinding wave of pleasure. Everything about Shenhua, from the coy smirk on her face to the mischievous way she teased him to way her body curved and undulated in his grasp to the way her very sex seemed to massage him from within seemed purpose built to coax every last drop out of him.

Rock hadn’t the slightest inkling how he was ever supposed to resist her.

He must have been far too caught up to notice her own climax, for having barely finished, her thighs tightened around his waist in a vice-like grip as she yanked him as close as she could, shivers wracking her entire body as she seemed to convulse as if from a seizure.

“Stahhhhhhhhp!” she screamed, finally releasing her grip on his tie as a sudden dramatic seizure gripped her entire body all at once.
Rock halted his ministrations, staring down at her in confusion, too stunned to move. “Shenhua?”

Shenhua continued to convulse, looking completely shattered.

“Hahhhhh…” she gasped, smiling up at him, absolutely red faced, mouth agape as she panted, eyes blurry. “Hahhhhh…that…that’s good, Rock…that’s…that’s real good…”

Rock gingerly reached out towards her, a note of concern in his eyes. “Uh…are you alright, Shenhua?”

Shenhua seemed to make an effort to laugh it off, but when he withdrew himself from her warmth, another bout of shivering took her body completely off guard, causing her legs to clench around him once against.


She released a litany of Taiwanese that Rock couldn’t understand, before finally managing to unclench her legs without seizing up again, and Rock was finally able to disentangle himself. Her legs closed and both her hands delved between her legs, letting out a delighted sigh as if she were trying to sooth an aching burn.

Rock had the wherewithal to fix his pants, although his shirt was a lost cause. He then sat down on the bed and peered down at the Taiwanese woman, wondering if he should do something.

“Shenhua?” he asked.

“Hahhh…” she exhaled, finally opening her eyes again. “Damn, Rock-man…I should work with you more often. You good for lot of things.”

Rock shook his head. “But you’re okay, right?”

She smirked and waved him off. “Oh, no worry, Rock-man. You rock me big time. Been a while since I had a joyride like that. Twinkie don’t know what she missing out on.”

Rock sighed in relief. Apparently, Shenhua just had generally violent orgasms. Somehow he didn’t find that surprising.

Then he registered what else she had said, and he flushed red.

“Wait a minute,” he blinked. “You’re talking about Revy again?”

Shenhua let out a heated laugh. “Oh, that bullshit, Rock-man. I see the way you look at her. You can’t even take your eyes off her when she in the room with you.”

Rock pursed his lips, staring at a blotch on one of the walls. “Yes I can…”

Shenhua let out another laugh. “Whatever you say, Rock-man. Just so you know, the only reason she not jump your bones yet is cause she too damn stubborn!”

Rock’s eyebrows shot up at that. “Wait…really?”
She smirked. “Oh, so now you curious about her?”

His face flushed even redder and Shenhua practically snorted in amusement.

“Hahah!” she chortled. “You so easy to read, Rock-man!”

Rock crossed his arms, going back to pouting. “Leave me alone.”

Shenhua smiled and summoned up the strength to crawl back over to him, cupping his cheek with one hand and bringing his face to her, placing a kiss on his other cheek.

“No can do, Rock-man,” she giggled. “You just too precious.”

He simply harrumphed and continued to pout in the direction of the wall.

Shenhua sighed and managed to slide off the bed and onto her feet, albeit somewhat wobbly.

“Come on, Rock-man,” she said, fetching her coat from the bedpost. “I don’t wanna stay in this shithole tonight. Let’s get you home before Revy wonders what happen to your shirt, huh?”

Rock blushed at the thought of what Revy might do if he had to explain why his shirt was in tatters and he sheepishly tugged his ruined button down closed as best as he could as he got up to follow her. Hopefully he had another clean shirt back at the apartment.

“I don’t think either of us in any shape to drive,” he observed as they walked out the door and back down the hallway to the stairs.

“Figure we call a cab,” Shenhua suggested as they made their way down.

“Heh,” Rock snorted. “The last cab we were in…didn’t exactly fair too well.”

Shenhua laughed out loud. “Hahah! Yeah! Hope the cab company will still take our calls.”

Rock shrugged. “As long as we don’t end up taking this one on another heist with us.”

When they reached the bottom of the stairs, Shenhua twirled around to drape her arms over his shoulders. Looking at her at that moment, Rock could have never guessed she’d just been in the middle of a heist, a high speed car chase, a hand-to-hand knife fight, gotten nearly blown up, gotten herself completely drunk, and had taken him on the ride of his life. Right then, she looked absolutely flawless.

Maybe it was because she had finally opened her eyes. And she was smiling at him as she kissed his lips.

“Next time, Rock-man,” she winked mischievously. “Next time.”

Next Chapter: Roberta

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