

Chapter 57

13th of April 1522
Thriller Bark

Selena grunted, her breath ragged as she pushed her body to its limits under the brutal regimen of Rob Lucci's shadow. With each fluid movement, she executed Rokushiki techniques, her muscles rippling beneath her tattered clothes like coils of steel. Her biceps bulged and contracted with each strike, while the sinewy lines of her legs flexed with incredible power as she launched herself into the air. The harsh training left her battered and bruised, but her determination was unyielding. The brutal impacts of Tekkai left her aching, yet she fought through the pain, driven by an insatiable desire to master the art. She had to conquer her ultimate challenge, the mastery of Rokushiki Ogi: Rokuogan, to complete her training.

Lucci's cold, merciless eyes watched her every move, pushing her to the brink. With a primal roar, she channeled every ounce of her strength into her fists, releasing a devastating shockwave that tore through the air. Blood trickled from her mouth, her tattered clothes exposing the sculpted lines of her muscular frame, each rip a testament to the brutality of her training. Her abs, chiseled and defined, tightened with each exertion, while her broad shoulders and powerful back flexed in concert. She met Lucci's gaze with defiant eyes, her spirit unbroken despite the agony. Embracing the pain, she understood it was the crucible forging her into a weapon of unparalleled might.

Selena reveled in the violence, her primal instincts fueling her desire to become stronger. Lucci's cruel methods were a necessary trial, the blood, sweat, and tears the price of her evolution. Her animalistic mentality drove her, a relentless predator seeking not just strength but the attention and affection of her alpha, Moria. The thought of pleasing him, of earning his approval and affection, was a powerful motivator. She was a warrior, a predator, and soon, she would emerge from this grueling regimen as a master of Rokushiki, ready to finally capture Moria's gaze and earn her place by his side.

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13th of April 1522
Amazon Lily

Onigumo and Doberman rushed through the thick forest of Amazon Lily, their senses sharp and alert, guided by the faint presence of four figures that felt unsettlingly distant, almost inhuman. The trees closed in around them, casting eerie, elongated shadows that danced ominously in the light. Suddenly, a barrage of shadowy arrows whistled through the air towards them.

"Fuck," Onigumo muttered, both Vice Admirals activating Tekkai, their bodies hardening to stone-like resilience. The arrows shattered harmlessly against their fortified forms, but the unexpected attack made them halt. They exchanged a look of disbelief, realization dawning simultaneously in their eyes.

"Shadows? Gecko Moria?" Doberman hissed, his grip tightening on his katana.

Before they could fully process the implications, the four figures they had sensed emerged from the darkness, moving with an unnatural fluidity. The first was a samurai, unfamiliar and imposing. Beside him, a shadowy figure puffed on a cigarette, the ember glowing eerily in the dim forest light. But it was the other two figures that sent a chill down their spines, making them exchange a grave look.

The third figure stepped forward, his silhouette distinct and menacing.

"Fuck... We must kill Moria before... If he can do that to all his dead enemies...!"

Shiryu of the Rain, the former head jailer of Impel Dow, stood before them. And beside him, the unmistakable form of Boa Hancock, her elegance and power even more pronounced in this darkened, spectral state.

Onigumo's expression hardened, his hybrid form bristling with tension. "We need to return to HQ... or kill Moria if we find him. This treachery cannot stand. With Shire here... it means he is the one behind Impel's Down fall!"

Doberman nodded. "Agreed. But first, we deal with these shadows."

The shadow samurai moved first, his blade slicing through the air with a whisper of death. Onigumo parried, his spider-like appendages bristling with energy. The shadow with the cigarette lunged at Doberman, who deflected the attack with a swift, calculated strike.

13th of April Thriller Bark

Doctor Hogback stood at the threshold of Nami's witch tower, a shiver of anticipation racing down his spine. Since Moria's abandonment of his zombies, Hogback had been starved of some of his macabre pursuits. Nami's proposal for an experiment had reignited his dark passions.

The laboratory before him, despite its deceptive cleanliness, exuded a profound unease. The sterile air carried a faint, clinical tang, and the meticulously arranged surgical instruments gleamed under the cold, artificial light. Pristine white walls bore arcane symbols drawn with unsettling precision. The room was a disorienting blend of order and chaos. Teddy bears with twisted grins and glinting sewn-on eyes lined the shelves. Some clutched surgical tools in their plush paws, while others displayed grotesque amalgamations of organs and bones, visible through glass panels embedded in their abdomens. A macabre parody of childhood innocence, transformed into a tableau of horror.

Nami stood at the room's center. A black latex corset clung to her curves, exposing pale flesh that seemed to glow in the cold light. A sheer black mesh covered her shoulders and upper arms, leading to fingerless gloves that left her dexterous fingers free to perform her dark magic. Her scandalously short skirt, adorned with chains and buckles, swayed with every movement, the metal jingling softly like sinister chimes. High stockings, held up by garters, and knee-high stiletto boots. Her provocatively cut nun's habit, adorned with lace, framed her face, while a choker with a dangling skull charm enhanced her eerie allure. Piercing blue eyes gleamed with sadistic delight.

Nami's voice, a sing-song melody, broke the silence. "Welcome, Doctor Hogback. Are you ready to see something super-duper special?"

Hogback nodded, unable to tear his eyes away from her. "Yes, Nami. I've been waiting for this moment."

Nami giggled. She approached the corpse Hogback had meticulously prepared, her hips swaying hypnotically. The body before them was once Nojiko, her dead sister, slain by her own hand. Nami began to chant ancient incantations, her voice a haunting lullaby that sent chills down Hogback's spine. Her fingers danced over Nojiko's naked body, tracing arcane symbols that seemed to draw the very essence of ... something ?...from the surrounding air. Nami's eyes never wavered from the corpse, her focus absolute. The candles flickered wildly, their flames bending towards her as if compelled by an unseen force.

Nojiko's corpse began to twitch, the first sign of the dark magic taking hold. Nami's chant grew louder, more fervent, as if she were pulling Nojiko's soul from the abyss. Hogback watched, his breath catching in his throat, as Nojiko's body convulsed violently, bones snapping back into place with sickening cracks. Her eyes flew open, wide and empty, before they fixed on Nami with a mixture of terror and madness.

"Rise and shine, sissy!" Nami sang, her voice dripping with sadistic glee. "Time to wake up and play!"

Nojiko's scream tore through the room, a chilling wail of agony and confusion. Her naked body thrashed against the altar, movements jerky and unnatural, as if fighting against the grotesque mockery of life forced upon her. Her pallid skin was veined and cold.

Nami clapped her hands, her eyes sparkling with twisted delight. "Isn't this fun, Doctor? Just look at her go!"

Nojiko's screams morphed into guttural growls, her eyes wild with a blend of fear and rage. She lunged at Nami, only to be jerked back by the chains binding her to the altar, the metal clinking ominously in the cold

air. The tower echoed with Nojiko's tortured cries, a harrowing scream of suffering that marked the beginning of a new, even darker, chapter in her life...well, in her undeath.

13th of April **Amazon Lily**

Blood splattered across the ground as Vice Admiral Doberman's katana clashed violently against the ghostly samurai's blade. The samurai struck again, relentless and merciless. Doberman snarled, his face twisted in fury and pain, fresh crimson leaking from his scars as he parried another deadly swipe. His coat, once pristine, was now a torn, blood-soaked banner of defiance. With a guttural roar, Doberman drove his knee into the samurai's shadowy form, dispersing the dark essence momentarily.

No time to savor the moment; the second shadow, a dark facsimile of Boa Hancock, was upon him, eyes glinting with malice. She struck with lightning speed, her Haki-infused fists smashing into Doberman's ribs, sending shockwaves of agony through his body. He staggered back, spitting blood, but countered with a wild, desperate slash. His blade cut through her shoulder. For a moment, there was silence, a glimmer of hope. But then, to his horror, the shadowy form began to knit itself back together, the arm reattaching without a single mark of harm. Doberman's heart pounded in terror as she reformed and attacked once more. Doberman blocked, but the force drove him to his knees. Hancock's shadow took advantage, her kick connecting with his jaw, snapping his head back with a sickening crunch. Blood poured from his mouth, mingling with the dirt. Summoning his last reserves of strength, he lunged at the samurai again, but it was futile. Hancock's shadow loomed over him, her foot crashing down onto his chest, agony ripping through him as he gasped, vision dimming. Life ebbed from his body, his final thought a grim realization that his absolute justice had met an absolute end.

Main Quest : [Summit War - The Obsidian Night]
Kill three Marines with a Fate of A or higher : 0/3 → 1/3

13th of April **Germa Kingdom**

Reiju strode through the corridors of the Germa Kingdom's floating fortress, her heels tapping a regular rhythm on the polished floors. Her light pink hair, curling upward at the tips, swayed with each step, partially veiling her right eye. The dark pink gauntlets on her arms caught the light, their polished surfaces glinting, while her blue ascot fluttered flirtatiously at her throat. Her light pink raid suit, split at the center to reveal a hint of her navel and the curve of her waist, hugged her figure. Soldiers lined the hallway, snapping to attention and saluting as she passed.

"Lady Reiju," they intoned in reverence, a chorus she did not even acknowledge.

Her purple eyes, sharp and unyielding, remained fixed ahead, her lips a full, enigmatic curve. She had perfected the art of the inscrutable mask, a necessity within the Vinsmoke family. Unlike her brothers, whose emotions were dulled by genetic engineering, she felt acutely and deeply. This was her first weakness. The second was more insidious: she was selfish. Despite her moral compass, which pointed unwaveringly towards kindness, she prioritized her comfort above all else. She extended kindness only when it posed no threat to her safety or well-being.

She reveled in the opulence her family's status afforded her—the silks that clung to her skin, the jewels that adorned her hair, the unquestioning obedience of the soldiers who bowed in her presence. Yet, beneath the surface, disdain simmered. Her brothers were brutes, her father a tyrant. They relished in cruelty, while she, with all her moral superiority, enjoyed the spoils of their conquests. Hypocrite, a voice inside her whispered, Truly, she disgusted herself...but she silenced it with the reminder that survival - and comfort - demanded compromise.

As she approached the heavy doors of her father's personal laboratory, she drew a breath, steeling herself for the encounter. Ichiji had already hinted at the subject of this meeting—her upcoming marriage. The very thought of it made her stomach churn, but she forced herself to maintain her composure. Who was she going to be sold to like cattle? Her brother had not told him - thinking the order of their father would be all that mattered.

The doors slid open with a soft hiss, revealing the vast expanse of Judge Vinsmoke's lab. At the center of the room stood her father, towering and imposing, engrossed in conversation with two figures: the erratic scientist Caesar Clown and the grotesque surgeon Hogback. Judge's face was alight with rare happiness, his eyes gleaming with an unusual enthusiasm.

Judge's face was alight with rare happiness, his eyes gleaming with unusual enthusiasm. "Reiju, working with Moria's scientists has been extraordinary. Caesar and Hogback are truly brilliant. We've made remarkable progress on enhancing our soldiers."

He turned back to the two scientists, gratitude evident in his voice. "Thank you both for your expertise. The advancements are invaluable to the Germa Kingdom."

Caesar Clown chuckled, his eyes alight with manic excitement. "It's our pleasure, Judge. You're still as brilliant yourself as twenty years ago."

"Indeed, the results are revolutionary", Hogback's grotesque smile widened.

Reiju kept her expression composed, masking the disdain simmering beneath. Her father's excitement over these inhumane experiments was repulsive, but she knew better than to show her true feelings. Judge's eyes flickered as if remembering something. He turned to Reiju, surprise evident. "Ah, Reiju, almost forgot. You're here to discuss your marriage."

Her heart tightened, but she stayed calm. "Yes, Father."

"You are to marry Gecko Moria. This alliance will cement our power and ensure the Germa Kingdom's dominance. It is very important, do you understand?"

The announcement hit like a blow, but Reiju's facade remained intact. Marrying Moria? Out of the question!

"Of course, Father," she said smoothly. "I understand."

Judge nodded, satisfied with her response.