

— *October 4th, 1917. Berlin, 8:41 A.M.* —

So this is where he was the whole time. The three years Aigis and Frieda had to grieve while being bullied daily and dealing with racism, Vergil was here all along. Aigis didn't have time to even get mad when a loud cacophonous shatter came from behind her. Aigis instinctually let go of Vergil to follow the noise. A chilly breeze wafted in through the open window and shards of glass littered the floor. Vergil, noticing an opening, slipped from under Aigis' grip and ran towards the exit.

"Oswald, stop him!" Aigis shouted, reaching for the Luger on her thigh.

"On it!" Oswald nodded. Like a quarterback, he sprinted towards Vergil, aiming to intercept his path. The older man saw the young Oswald rocketing in his direction. Vergil balled up his fist and struck Oswald right in the diaphragm, winding him. Oswald buckled over, gasping for air. Vergil raised his hand, and every glass shard on the floor floated up into the air. With a flick of his wrist, the army of shards flew towards Aigis, aiming right for her eyes. Aigis quickly took her hand off her holstered pistol and raised both of her hands, manifesting an Aurae shield. A thin, clear sheet appeared before her, deflecting the glass.

Vergil had already bolted. His feeling hadn't disappeared yet, meaning Aigis could still track him down. Oswald stood up slowly. His face and body were decorated with cuts from stray glass.

"You okay?" Aigis asked.

"I got scratched up pretty badly, but I'm alright." Oswald brushed off extra glass off of his uniform. He looked over at the shattered window.

“We have to follow this son of a bitch!” Aigis shouted. She grabbed onto Oswald’s uniform tunic and dragged him outside. Kollner and the other six men of the Gibor squad pulled up.

“What’s going on?” Kollner demanded. “We heard loud noises coming from this area.”

“I found our target!”

Kollner prepared his Luger. “Where is he?”

Aigis swung with her head to signal the other men to follow her. The entire squad followed her as she ran through the autumn streets of the imperial capital. There was one thing and one thing only on her mind. To track down her father and make him talk.

A minute of running later, and there he was. Vergil stood in the middle of the street. He spread his arms out in a cross.

“I’m right here, imperial scum. Come get me.” Vergil taunted, baring his gapped teeth. Aigis outstretched her hand towards a street lamp and pulled it out of the ground. She launched it straight at Vergil. The pole hit Vergil. He disintegrated into fine particles. The whole unit inched close with Aigis at the front. He vanished completely, not a trace in sight.

“How—?” Aigis stammered.

“Over here.” His voice snaked in her ear. But something was off. His voice came from three different directions at once. The whole squad was on edge. Each of the members of the team scanned their surroundings, trying to spot him. Three copies of Vergil spawned. One of them was in front of Aigis at a nearby wheat wagon. Another was standing on the roof of a bank, and the third stood next to Oswald. Which one of them was the real Vergil?

Oswald took no chances and swung at the Vergil that stalked him from the side. That one turned to dust the moment his knuckles made contact with the false face. Kollner aimed his

pistol, alongside the other soldiers aiming their rifles, fired at the Vergil on the roof in unison. . The bullets passed through the body, proving the man to be an illusion. That only left the Vergil in front of the wheat wagon. Aigis prepared her rifle and pointed the bayonet at him. Her arms trembled. She transferred the trembling of her arms into her diaphragm and forced the air from her lungs. A loud war cry escaped her lips, and Aigis ran at him with the bayonet of her Gewehr fixing to pierce where his heart would be. Vergil stood in the way, sneering.

The pointed bayonet cut right through him. His form yet again disintegrated to ash. The illusion, however, did not buffer her charge, and the bayonet pierced the bag of wheat. Aigis tore it out of the bag, and white, powdery wheat dust exploded. The wind spread it to cover the entire street. Pedestrians waved helplessly in the air, trying to clear their vision. Every car on the road pulled over to the side. Aigis and the other soldiers coughed and sputtered. She felt her hands grasp her Gewehr tight. Gripping the barrel, she used the bayonet as a makeshift walking stick, pushing herself forward. They managed to make it out of the wheat storm.

The real Vergil hid behind an alleyway, watching the chaos unfold. He slid out of the alley and saw a black Mercedes-Benz 28/60 taxi that had pulled over on the road. He opened the back door, got inside, and closed it behind him.

“Hit the gas.” Vergil commanded. The taxi driver twisted his body to look at the frantic man.

“No can do, pal. Until this... fog clears up, I can't go anywhere.”

Vergil used psychokinesis to push the taxi driver's forehead against the steering wheel.

“That wasn't a question. Drive.”

The taxi driver quickly composed himself and gripped the steering wheel with both hands. “Understood!”

The taxi driver started the engine and sped down the street, clearing the dust. Aigis and the unit stood on the sidewalk, trying to find Vergil. Aigis sensed his presence barreling towards her at a rapid rate. She saw the speeding black taxi cab running down the street. Vergil leaned out of the window and waved his hat in a mocking manner.

“Farewell, friends! May we never meet again!” He cackled. Kollner and the soldiers opened fire on the taxicab. Bullets struck the entire rear and roof of the car. The driver ducked, struggling to keep the car from swerving.

“Good lord, mate! What did you do to have the army firing at you?!”

“Mouth shut, eyes on the road.” Vergil snapped. He put a hand on the roof and vaulted out of the side window and stood on the roof. The men firing aimed higher. Vergil blocked all of the gunfire with Auras shield. After every burst of fire, he brought down the shield to keep it from breaking and staggering him. He even managed to reflect some bullets back at the Battalion soldiers. Schultz got struck in his leg, two men got hit in their fingers and couldn’t hold their rifles anymore.

Aigis watched as the car slipped further and further away from her grasp. He couldn’t get away that easily. When she needed a pillar of strength, a father the most, he was in the nation’s capital gambling away his money, living a high-class lifestyle and doing all kinds of debauchery. How he could just punch her, kick her, abuse her with his magic, yet he could drink himself in a stupor completely guilt-free. She needed answers, and she was getting them, no matter what.

Without thinking, Aigis slammed her fist into the ground. A giant ripple of cobblestone and dirt erupted from the ground, shaking the entire street. The wave hit the taxi’s underside, sending it into the air. The car rotated as it flew, knocking Vergil off-balance. He got tossed off of

the taxi, but caught the door of the taxi, hanging on for dear life. She then took her other hand and thrust it at the taxi. It froze solid in the air. Vergil hung off the door.

“I knew I should’ve stayed home today!” The taxi driver wailed. Aigis flicked open the door, dragged out the kicking and panicking taxi driver, and set him safely down on the sidewalk. Now only Vergil remained in the taxi. Aigis raised her arms higher, then brought it down with a big heave. The taxi plummeted to the ground. It exploded, showering Berlin in a hue of orange. The wheels flew past a couple of the soldiers. Aigis’ front warmed from the sea of flames. Aigis started approaching the debris. Vergil wasn’t dead. Which was good. He was not going to leave until Aigis’ every question was answered.