

— *July 15th, 1925. Weisheitsbach, Hesse, 8:00 A.M.* —

Aigis stepped out of Etta's home early in the morning, her mind full of the previous night. All this time, Etta had been her grandmother. Despite the whirlwind of revelations in the same night, Aigis' mind was clear. To everyone on the outside, she just appeared as a proud Scharführer of the SA.

Aigis stepped out of the house, prepared to head to the library. But she saw the 8-year-old Hilda standing on the sidewalk, wearing a backpack. Aigis, without a word, waved awkwardly at the girl.

"Hi." Hilda waved innocently.

"Hey, Hilda. Where are you going?"

"Where I always go when Frau Etta goes to work. To my friend's house."

"Okay," Aigis responded in a stilted manner. "Have fun."

"Thanks. Oh, and cool armband." Hilda complimented before walking off to go see her friend. Aigis took one more look at Hilda. Etta seemed to treat Hilda nicely. Not too lenient, not too authoritative. But what if Etta messed up again and slipped back to her old ways with Vergil? Whatever, Hilda wasn't her concern. Aigis walked towards the library, the only thing she could focus on right now was the library.

She entered the library. Etta was at the counter, wiping off dust from it. She stopped her rhythmic wiping and perked up upon seeing Aigis.

"Good morning," She waved, rag still in hand. "Have you come to work today?"

Aigis didn't respond. Instead, she waved a hand in front of the old woman. Her eyes fluttered closed as she fell asleep, her body thudding as it hit the floor. Aigis wasted no time heading to the back room. She slammed her hand against the handprint and used her magic to

turn the lock. The door opened by itself, revealing the mountains of Psychokinetic knowledge. Shortly after, she heard the marching of a million boots outside. She went back to the front of the library where her SA squad stood in perfect lines, giving her the Nazi salute. The cars they rode to Weisheitsbach were behind them. She descended down the front stairs.

“The books Herr Hitler asked for are in the backroom. Each of you, take as many as you can and load them up in the car. Got it?”

The men nodded and broke rank, heading inside the library. Aigis sat down on the steps, waiting for her orders to be fulfilled. She looked bored, people watching as her stormtroopers came back, each carrying a large, wobbly stack of books. It took about five minutes for each of the twelve men to finish loading up the car. Once it was done, they stood in formation and faced her. All of them except Schultz stood proud.

“That should be all of the books, Scharführer!” A random storm troop declared.

“Good work, everyone.”

“Shall we get back on the road and deliver the books to Party Comrade Hitler?”

“One moment. I have one last order.”

The stormtroopers looked at each other, confused. Aigis stood up and walked over to her soldiers. She faced the library, her arms behind her back.

“Burn the library down.” She commanded. Her voice didn’t emote at all, but the troopers felt her intensity. The troops didn’t react. They were just told to go get some books. They heard nothing about it.

“Is that necessary, Scharführer?” Another troop asked.

“The important books are the ones already in the car. The other ones are useless.”

The first troop stepped up. “What about the old woman behind the counter? I think she’s sleeping.”

“Doesn’t matter. Burn it.” Aigis’ face was starting to wrinkle a little. She got sick of repeating herself.

“Did you hear what I just said—”

“Did YOU?” The blonde officer got into the troop’s face. He backed up, frightened. “Burn. It. Down.”

Immediately, all of the troops complied. A few of them ran back inside of the library, Schultz included. He gained a wide grin on his face.

“Now you’re speaking my language, Greenie!” Schultz cackled, running inside. The SA stormtroopers ran around inside the library, pushing down all of the shelves. The book fluttered in the air like white doves, pages shedding off of them like feathers. Once they knocked over all of the shelves, they grabbed the clusters of books and scattered them across the floor, making sure the entire floor was coated in books. Once the job was done, all of the troops exited the building. Schultz was the last one to leave. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a box of matches. He dipped into the small carton and pulled out four of them, one to go in each space between his fingers. In one quick motion, he struck all the matches. The sticks were all lit now. He gingerly kissed the flame of each of the matchsticks and closed his eyes in a short meditative prayer. Suddenly, he flung all the matches inside of the library, landing on all of the antiquated books. In almost an instant, the embers grew into a tower of flame. Aigis and her troops stood in formation, watching the library burn.

Most of the troops stared at the fire with a stoic indifference. Schultz looked at the inferno with a craze in his eye. Meanwhile, Aigis had a tiny smile on her face, her eyes

glistening with delight. She thought back to her family. To her mother, to Frieda. Even to Irma. She counted the times Vergil either hurt her family, friends or the many times he hurt Aigis. Then she looked at the fire and felt her thirst for vengeance melt away. The woman who had caused it all, intentional or not, was now nothing more than fuel to that fire. The Aurae that released from her body likely fueled the flames even more. Aigis then thought about Hilda. No matter how hard Etta could've tried, the chance of another Vergil spawning was too great in Aigis' mind, even if she had apparently learned her lesson. In her mind, Hilda wouldn't understand it now, but later in her life, she would thank her from a much worse fate. What if Etta really had changed? That she really wanted to change after the tremendous failure of raising Vergil? That hypothetical didn't matter to Aigis. What was done was done.

“So are we done here, Scharführer?” A third troop asked, still gazing at the warm fire.

“Not yet. There's one more place to be taken care of.” Aigis ordered, her face back to a neutral state. She led all of her stormtroopers back to Etta's house. Aigis ran up to Hilda's room and searched all of it. She found hidden leftover Psychokinetic books under her bed, in her drawer, on the windowsill, on the shelf. Aigis took it all and tossed them out of the window for a random stormtrooper to catch. She then ran to Vergil's old room and trashed it. She scooped up all of his old childhood photos and individually stomped on them, destroying the memories. She ripped up the family tree Etta had made. She found Vergil's old uniform and his medals. Aigis threw them on the ground and stomped on the medals, smashing them. She did the same to the uniform, tearing holes into it. She knocked over everything else on the floor until the entire room had been unrecognizable.

Lastly, she went downstairs. She took out her Luger pistol and shot at any and every family photo that was hanging up on the wall. The glass shattered and fell to the floor, leaving

only the wooden frame behind. Aigis then aimed her pistol at the wooden frames and shot at them, the bullets lodging themselves in the splintering frame. Eventually, the frame could barely hold itself together. Aigis fired her pistol one last time, blowing the frame to pieces. She put the pistol back in its holster and left the house.

“Schultz. Burn this house down too.”

Schultz had the happiest grin Aigis had ever seen, a big drool dripping from his lips. He was ready to comply with any order given to him.

“I’m actually starting to like you now!” He exclaimed. He ran inside and turned on the gas stove, letting the noxious gas from it slowly take over the living room. Once he was sure the house was full of gas, he exited it and lit a match. He flicked the match inside the home from a distance. As the flames ate the house, Aigis and her troops marched away from the area.

“Alright, let’s get these books back to Herr Hitler.”

Aigis turned around and felt the uncomfortably cozy warmth of the burning building from behind her, a relief washing over her. This time, she truly felt liberated. It was a much more expansive freedom than the one she got when she killed Vergil. Even after killing him, his poison stuck to her mind and her chest, infecting her thoughts and actions. The memory of the entire Schumacher bloodline had finally been purged from her memory, turned to ash. She was no longer a Schumacher, and she could now shed that shameful family name from her identity. Scharführer Aigis had a much better sound to her anyway.