

— *April 8th, 1917. Ruheplatz, 8:45 A.M.* —

The harassment the girls received after Otto's death for a couple of years was relentless. Frau Schlaeger didn't even want the girls to continue attending, as she believed the girls "were a potential hazard to the class". Even outside of class, if Aigis or Frieda were unfortunate enough to run into one of the kids outside of school, the abuse would continue. One time, Gisela got a bucket full of pig's blood from the butcher and dumped it on Aigis, shouting "Try to wash THAT, murderer!" Another time, another boy in the class found a dead rat. While Frieda sat outside the general store waiting for Aigis to come back, he snuck up behind her and stuffed the rodent corpse down the back of her blouse. "Revive THAT, greenie!" he chortled as he ran away. There was even a time one night when a rock was flung into the kitchen window while Irma was cooking, striking her in the jaw. Although the adults of the town didn't necessarily agree with the behavior of the children, they simply stood and watched as the poor Psychokinetic girls were being terrorized. After the first year of harassment, however, the physical and verbal abuse died down. All that was exchanged death glares.

Aigis, now 17, strolled through the town. She needed some things from the store so Irma could cook breakfast. Aigis took a liking to peaceful walks in the morning or at night. Not having eyes peering into her at all times was a refreshing feeling. It reminded her of the days people saw her as a person.

Before she arrived at the store, she heard sounds. A familiar sound. Or rather, a cluster of sounds. Multiple footsteps and the jangling of rifles and metals. Immediately, Aigis hid behind a building and peered over the wooden wall to locate the sound. Sergeant Kollner and his ten men were back, their golden helmets so shiny it nearly blinded her. At first, she thought she had the wrong squad. From what she heard, there had been 17 other squads across the German Empire

who were for the Battalion. Even though it was still Kollner, she couldn't confirm whether or not it was *them*.

Then she saw it. On the right lapel of the infantryman uniform. A medal of the Armanen Gibor rune. The same one that squad three years ago wore. Only this time, the Sergeant and his soldiers also wore a shiny Iron Cross. *Bravery*. They lynched a 14-year-old boy and hung him from a tree. Their entire job is marching throughout Germany and killing people, leaving behind fear and propaganda. That was bravery to the Empire? To the Kaiser? It took every ounce of willpower Aegis had to not lunge at them. It almost seemed as the longer time passed, the more enraged it made her.

"I feel stupid." A younger soldier, possibly in his late 20s, complained.

"For what?" An older goateed soldier, likely in his 40s, questioned.

"I told my girlfriend I was coming home soon."

"But the war is not over." The goatee soldier reminded him.

"I thought it was! But then America just HAD to join! Why do they even care about the Frenchies?"

"You know the drill, boys," Kollner spoke above the argument, although he was red in the face from the sheer amount of walking the unit had to do. "A new enemy joined, so we need to do one more sweep around the country to check for any more Psychokinetics hiding out here."

"I don't know about YOU, sir, but does the Kaiser really expect the whole Battalion to march across the whole country on foot?" Schultz argued, readjusting his shoulders to move his rifle in a more comfortable position.

"I tried to talk to the Kaiser about giving us more funding."

"What'd he say?"

“He told me the tanks, airplanes and ships were only for the front line fighters. ‘You have the easy job, so stop complaining.’”

The soldiers let out a collective wow of pure amazement. The unit continued talking as Aigis stalked them from behind that wall. She saw them walk back into Wessels’ Inn. She didn’t even mean to stare at those monsters for as long as she did. She imagined another timeline where those evil men didn’t stop at their town. Frieda and Aigis would still be in school, laughing and having a good time with Gisela, Karl-Heinz, and the group. Frieda and Otto would still have a future together. Aigis and her sister would still be seen as actual people. Pauline would still have a reason to live.

“The Inn, huh?” Aigis muttered conspiratorially.