

— *January 24th, 1918. Selkefall, 10:30 P.M.* —

Over the next two weeks, Frieda finally began to grasp the fundamental basics of psychokinetic magic. She went from not being able to make a rock budge even a millimeter to lifting it off the group for a grand total of about two seconds. She would lift it, be proud of herself, get the feeling that a giant boulder weighed against her gut, winding her and forcing her to her knees, then it would drop back into the water. She would also often meditate, closing her eyes and sitting on top of one of the rocks splitting the currents in the waterfall. She found that she could focus, but often would get distracted by random noises such as birds chirping, the sounds of the forest, or even just a fly landing nearby. Despite all these discouragements, she continued to press on. It would take her far too long to walk to the nearest town, so she wasn't leaving this spot until she learned what she needed to.

Whenever she wasn't training, she and Lui would usually banter about different things. Most of them were petty and irrelevant, but in the exchanges, Lui found out a few things about Frieda. Her older half-sister's name was Aigis, she was only six months older than Frieda. That was about all he could find out about her on the rare occasion that she actually felt like telling him something. He never pressed her about anything, though. Asked questions when she was in the mood, relented when she wasn't.

This particular night, Lui sat on top of a rock, looking up at the clear, night sky. He always thought the stars were the sky's acne, the Moon was an overgrown pimple, and the North Star was the king zit. He always found stargazing a tropey, overdone cliché in novels. The boy closed his eyes, sighing and listening to the soft rustling of leaves and the bubbling of the water.

Frieda leaned up from her grass mattress while still staying under her leaf blanket.

“You're not headed to bed yet?”

“I’m not sleepy,” He told her, not looking in her direction. “I’m going to stay up a bit longer.”

“Alright,” She conceded. “Night.”

Frieda slid back under the barely warm covers of her nature-made bed, falling back into a dreamless sleep. About ten minutes passed after that. Lui continued to stargaze, not focusing on any particular star or constellations.

“I don’t get it,” He mumbled to himself, keeping his voice low so Frieda wouldn’t hear him and wake up. “Her powers should be more advanced by now, especially if what she told me about her bloodline is true.”

Lui turned around to look at the sleeping girl. This time, she was sprawled out. Normally she would be at peace, sleeping soundly. But this time, she was moving about, moaning a bit and her face twisted in a look of pain and discomfort. She mumbled some things incoherently. Lui cautiously hopped off his rock and slowly approached her. She muttered something stressfully, forcing him to pause a bit. When the coast was clear, he knelt down and hovered his hand over her head.

In that moment, hundreds of images gushed into Lui’s mind, and all he could see, hear and feel were those images. The first thing he felt was the pattering of rain hitting him. The muggy humidity of the rain. Above him, a red-headed boy hung from a noose underneath a tall tree. His eyes were devoid of life, like a stale lake. He then saw a blonde girl wearing a soldier’s uniform in a dark basement thrashing a rifle about, knocking everything down in her path. He could smell a thick blend of candle smoke and musty books, as her eardrum-splitting screams shook his very brains. The stinging cold of the snow biting at his legs as that same girl towered

over him, looking down on him with tired, murky eyes. The look he was given was a look of pure exhaustion yet malice.

Lui yanked his hand away from Frieda's head, nearly stumbling over as he jumped back. Suddenly, everything about Frieda made sense to him.

"I see," Lui concluded, now calm again. "So that's the issue. In that case, I know what I have to do."