

— October 3rd, 1917. Werder, 5:20 P.M. —

Aigis and Oswald worked closely together to keep the Golden Battalion from claiming any more victims. Oswald at every junction found some sort of diversion to lead the men away while Aigis warned the psychokinetics of their impending danger. The two continued talking by themselves since the Sergeant didn't like fraternizing with his men, and the other Gibor unit soldiers bullied Aigis and Oswald on sight. It felt like with him, Aigis had a lot more hope that she could one day break out of this paranoid, trigger-happy squad and go back home to her family.

The unit perched in Werder, Brandenburg, following yet another anonymous tip about a psychokinetic. Aigis proudly marched through the streets along with the men. She knew she didn't have to do a thing. Oswald had her covered. Aigis used her senses to dowse for the man, and after a while she located his presence. It brought them to an antique shop, selling a variety of porcelain, china, glass and all other sorts of accessories and furniture. The feeling came from the owner, who was an elderly man. He had been running the shop ever since the last owner died and left it to him, and had become a very wealthy merchant.

The Gibor unit marched in. The man had been gently cleaning off the items with a soft rag. He looked up at them.

“Welcome! Please, have a look around. Military and imperial officials get a half-off discount on everything in the store.” He welcomed warmly, pushing up his thick bifocal glasses. Aigis looked behind her to lock eyes with Oswald. He had a huge, triumphant grin on his face. Next to him, Schultz gave a sidelong glance. He looked at Kollner. Kollner responded with a quick and simple nod. Oswald took one step forward before Schultz blocked his way.

“Hey, Oswald. There's a bakery across the street. Want to see what it's about?”

“Why?” Oswald asked, confused.

“Why not? We’re pals, aren’t we?”

“You don’t feel like a friend to me.” The boy huffed, crossing his arms. Schultz lost patience and yanked on Oswald’s ear.

“Just come with me!” He aggressively told him off, towing Oswald away from the store. Aigis started to chase after them, but Kollner sidestepped right in her way.

“Now that we’re free from distractions, you do the honors.”

“Shouldn’t we wait for Oswald to come back?” Aigis questioned. She tried her best to sound neutral, in order to keep her secret.

“Why? We’re fine without Volkmann,” He cut her off. “Now, do your job and point us to the Psychokinetic.”

The men were all looking at her. The store owner was still happily polishing the goods, but she could feel his curiosity towards the soldiers. Aigis scanned the store. There were no other customers. Only her, the men, and the store owner.

“We’re waiting, Schumacher.”

It had to be the old man. Aigis knew that already. She thought about waiting for Oswald and Schultz to return so he could improvise a plan. Oswald would come back soon. He had to. Just as soon as she could find a way to stall some more. She found a square vase on the shelf.

“Look! Over there!” She shouted. Kollner followed her finger.

“What about that vase?”

“It’s... pretty, isn’t it?” Aigis asked, trying to buy time.

Kollner looked at her for a few seconds before approaching the vase. He took a good look at it, then looked back at Aigis. The girl had a smile plastered on her face.

“What about the vase is vital information?” He pressed again, this time raising his voice a little. Aigis tucked her hand underneath the helmet, scratching the back of her head.

“Maybe there are Psychokinetics hiding in there—”

Her thoughts were cut short by the feeling of cold steel smooching her chin. The barrel of Kollner’s Luger propped her head up by the chin, and the officer looked at her with a blank, cold stare. His fingers tightened their grip around the pistol.

“Looks like someone forgot where his place was. Do you need a reminder?”

“N-No, sir.” Aigis struggled to swallow the lump in her throat.

“Then follow your orders. I will not ask you again.”

Kollner removed the pistol from under Aigis’ head. She looked at the man once more. He gently held his glasses trying to read a letter at the counter, completely unaware of the unit’s true intentions. Aigis’ body began to rattle under her uniform. She closed her eyes. She felt her arm rise, and a single finger pointed forward. The cocking of the Gewehr 98 rifles crept up in the air. Six of them. Eighteen out-of-sync gunshots led to a bunch of shattering noises, the antiques being blown beyond any possible repair. When Aigis opened her eyes, the merchant fell limp on the floor, like a helpless puppet cut loose from its strings. The lens of his glasses were mere shards now. A stain of red began to pool underneath the dead body. Aigis choked, letting a stifled sob escape. A familiar calloused hand patted her on the back.

“Good work,” Kollner smiled. It was genuine, but still made Aigis want to throw up all over his smug, mustached face. “Now let’s move out!”

All of the men in the squad marched out of the store, leaving Aigis alone with the dead, elderly shop owner. A man who spent years of his life getting his own business together, robbed of his labor in just twenty-six seconds.