

— *July 12th, 1925. Etta's House, 8:30 P.M.* —

Etta's home was rather quaint. It had pretty floral wallpaper, with an oil painting sprinkled here and there. The dining room table was well worn, with little chips in the wood, and the chairs had cushions that looked a little too flat for comfort. Aigis couldn't shake the smell of moth balls permeating the room. Etta was pouring some tea into two china cups. Aigis was trying to be a polite guest. She was sitting on a very soft chair, hands folded neatly in her lap. The baggy pants of her brown SA uniform added an uncomfortable layer to the stiff seat. The tea smelled very sweet.

Etta delivered Aigis her cup of tea with a smile. "Here you go, liebes."

"Thank you very much, dear." Aigis accepted the tea cup with two hands. She couldn't help but look up at the ceiling every now and then. She could sense two people in this house. The other person seemed to be in a room directly above her, possibly the second floor. She tried to ignore it. She felt her cheeks flush red a bit when she saw Etta looking at her expectantly. She had been waiting for Aigis to drink her tea. Aigis sipped a small amount of the tea, then gave a nod.

"It's pretty good."

"Thank you so much, dear. It is my own blend. I make it from rose hips, apples, and oranges," The elderly woman chuckled a little bit. Aigis felt a twinge of guilt at having to lie about the tea. It was quite bitter. "The biscuits should be done in one moment. I just have one more thing to take care of."

Etta went over to the stairs, slowly waddling as she trudged. "Hilda! Come and get your dinner!"

The second floor room was silent for a moment. Then a door opened. Footsteps creaked above them. The footsteps trailed their way to the open stairwell. The sound of creaking stairs began, followed by the sight of a girl slowly making her way down the steps.

Hilda was a small child around 7 or 8 years old. She had shoulder length black hair that was cut straight. She was dressed in a simple gray nightgown that hung down to her ankles. She looked mad, but then again, her eyebrows were kind of thick, so Aigis couldn't tell whether Hilda was mad or just had a resting bitch face. She looked nothing like Etta, but Aigis didn't want to intrude.

As soon as the child reached the bottom of the stairs, she locked eyes with Aigis. Aigis didn't know how to react. Should she smile? She tried. It was awkward. Hilda shot back behind the stairwell, hiding. Etta didn't seem too surprised by this behavior.

"Hilda, Frau Aigis is our guest. No need to be scared of her. She's friendly." Etta beckoned for the child to come out. Hilda slowly peeked her head out, still glaring. Aigis wasn't sure what to say. She wasn't used to talking to children. Wearing a paramilitary uniform likely didn't help with that either. Eventually, Etta guided the young girl out of hiding and led her to the dinner table across from Aigis. She started scooping out mashed potatoes and sausages. Aigis and Hilda simply stared at each other until Etta delivered both of their plates to them.

Etta sat down and looked at Aigis. Aigis looked at her plate. Hilda glared at her plate. Everyone took a bite. After a few moments, Etta spoke.

"Forgive me for asking, but what are you doing wearing that?" Aigis had no idea how to respond. Her mouth opened a little, but she said nothing. She had not expected a question like this. Etta took another bite. Hilda spoke, breaking the silence. Her voice was a bit nasally, making her sound more sarcastic than she likely intended.

“Is she a policewoman?”

“No, no. I’m paramilitary.” Aigis corrected sheepishly. Hilda stopped eating, clearly confused by what she just said. Etta jumped in.

“It basically means she’s military, but with a group, not the German military.”

Aigis nodded. “Yes. That’s it.”

Etta covered her mouth with her knuckle to catch any food in her mouth. She then responded.

“Are you one of those political boys?”

“I’m part of the Sturmabteilung. You could think of me as security, I guess.”

Hilda took her index finger off of her fork and pointed at Aigis’ left arm, which had the red swastika armband.

“That cross-thingy. I’ve seen it before.”

Aigis took another sip of her tea. “That is a swastika, and it’s the symbol for the NSDAP, which I work for.”

“Strange job for a Psychokinetic girl. Especially one as young as you.”

“I was actually homeless for a few years. The party helped me. They found me a home, and they gave me a job to do.

Hilda sighed wistfully. She still sounded accepting of Aigis’ job choice. “I suppose with the economy these days, you do what you have to do. I’m happy for you.”

Aigis nodded, thanking her silently. The rest of the dinner went on. They talked about small things, like the weather. The whole time, Hilda had her head down, picking at her food. Her gaze occasionally drifted over to Aigis. Aigis pretended not to notice. She didn’t want to

make the poor girl feel awkward. She must not see a lot of people. Once dinner was finished, Etta cleared the plates.

“How much longer are you in Weisheitsbach?” Etta shouted over the running water, making sure Aigis could hear her.

“I don’t have to go back to Munich for another couple of days.” Etta put the dishes down on the counter. She wiped her wet hands off on a small towel, then sat down at the dinner table again.

“I have an open bedroom upstairs if you need a place to stay for tonight.”

Aigis thought for a moment. On one hand, she didn’t want to intrude. On the other, she had no other place to stay. Besides, she could save some marks on the hotel.

“I wouldn’t mind that. Thank you very much for your hospitality, Frau Etta. I really appreciate it.”

After dinner, Etta led Aigis to the empty bedroom, then left her alone. Aigis scanned the bedroom. It belonged to a boy before. She approached the dresser and picked up one of the photos. In it, a young boy around 10 years old is sitting on a bench, smiling. He is wearing a white sweater, and his dark hair is combed back. His blue eyes are looking right at the camera. He has a big smile on his face. Aigis flipped it over and saw a message on the back.

“I love you forever, mama. From Vivi” Under it, another scribble was written. It read the date of the photo being framed: 08/09/1872. This photo was over 50 years old. Why did they still have it?

Aigis put the photo back on the dresser, then walked over to the bed and lied down. She stared at the ceiling, feeling the mattress beneath her. Despite it being so old, it was still comfortable. Likely because no one has slept in it for decades. She wondered what happened to

the boy. Where was he now? She could tell from the several items scattered about that the boy enjoyed fishing, reading, and generally going outside. Maybe he joined the army. Or maybe he moved away. She decided not to pry into it. It wasn't her place. Now it was time to go to bed.