

— April 9th, 1917. Ruheplatz Inn, 4:25 P.M. —

The first thing to greet Aigis upon entering the local inn was the blinding stench of alcohol. Her face instinctually scrunched up at the assault, but she resisted the urge to gag. Aigis took a step inside, but something squelched underneath her foot. She lifted her black ballet flat and saw a yellowed floorboard drenched in amber liquid. Littered across the entire inn floor were spilled beer mugs. Wessels on the floor beside the front desk, vigorously scrubbing the beer off of the floor with an annoyed look on his face. Wessels also had chronic back pain, as his hunched back could attest to.

“Are these grown men or schoolboys?” He cursed under his breath. Wessels didn’t notice the blonde teenager behind him.

“Herr Wessels?”

Wessels stopped cleaning and snapped his head to look at Aigis. He let out a huge sigh of relief and dropped the rag, still sitting on the floor.

“Fraulein Aigis. You’re a sight for a sore back.”

“That makes no sense.”

“It makes more sense the less you think about it,” The man complained. “I’d come up and greet you properly, but I’m having my own issues right now.”

Aigis scanned the state of the ruined inn. “What happened here?”

“The Golden Battalion happened. Every time they come in and stay here, they trash the place by getting inebriated beyond reason. They think they’re so high and mighty because they’re a part of the Imperial army. All it means to me is that they are too important to get kicked out for acting like brutes.”

“So why’d you let them stay here?”

“You really think I’m foolish enough to look eleven armed men in the eye and say no?”

Aigis giggled. “I bet you feel glad you let them stay.”

Wessels shrugged. “Honestly, I should’ve refused and let them kill me. At least I would have a body that didn’t ache and a business that didn’t have to pay for damages. So anyway, is there any reason you’re here?”

Aigis clasped her hands and widened her eyes at Wessels, giving him a puppy dog stare.

“Do you have a map or a blueprint of the Inn I can borrow?”

The back pain sufferer raised an eyebrow. “A map?”

“Yes sir.”

“The hell a girl your age want a map for?”

Crap. Aigis’ eyes darted across the corners of the inn, trying to dig through the piles of excuses in the back of her mind.

“I… have an interest in architecture.” She lied, failing to keep her voice clear and stable.

Wessels narrowed his eyes, staring at Aigis for a solid two seconds before letting out an amused snort. “I never knew you studied architecture, Fraulein.”

“Yep! It’s my passion!” She forced a smile, brandishing a thumbs up.

He chuckled. Aigis felt sweat start to drip from her forehead, and she hoped he couldn’t see the beads running down her face.

“Look under the registry book on the desk.”

Aigis nodded and made her way over to the wooden countertop and picked up the book. Under it was a full map of the inn, including the floor plans. She snatched up the paper and looked upon it with satisfaction.

“Thank you, Herr Wessels.” She thanked. Wessels grunted in response. As Aegis turned to leave, she looked up at the ceiling. In the back left corner, there was a gaping hole in the ceiling. However, the wooden rafters underneath were undamaged. Wessels glanced behind him and noticed Aegis staring at the hole.

“That’s from the storm three years ago. Been fixing to get it repaired, but I never got around to it.”

Aegis’ mouth crept up as she leered deviously at the hole in the roof. “Good to know.”