

— *September 30th, 1914. Ruheplatz Inn, 2:00 P.M.* —

Wessels owned the Ruheplatz Inn, which is a very small inn the size of a hospital ward. Frankly, due to how small and remote of a village Ruheplatz is, the inn barely sees any activity. Most out-of-towners have relatives here they can stay with. Wessels actually didn't mind the inactivity. Overhead costs were cheap, and he enjoyed his peace and quiet working in the quaint establishment.

He was cleaning out a beer mug with a cloth until a bunch of men came into the building. They looked like standard Imperial German infantry soldiers, carrying Gewehr 98s on either their shoulders or backs. However, the pickelhaube helmets on the heads of the soldiers were completely golden. They weren't plated in gold or decorated with gold, they were completely made out of it. That, and hanging from their lapels was the Armanen gibor rune.

The leader, a brown-haired man with a brown mustache, approached Wessels. Wessels stared deep into his distant reflection on the helmets. Wessels snapped back to attention.

"Uh, yes? Can I help you?"

"Good afternoon, young man. I am Sergeant Kollner of the Golden Battalion." The man had a larger than life air to him, one that demanded authority and respect.

"Aren't battalions a little..." Wessels leaned past him. "Larger?"

"I only command the Gibor squad. We're a small operation, only about ten soldiers in each squad. We need a place to stay for a few days."

Wessel paused. He never heard about this group in his life. In fact, the village was so out of the way, that most news he got was days old. Still, what was he going to do? Say no to the ten men carrying army rifles? Wessels was no coward, but he was no fool either.

“Sure.” He choked out, very unwilling to actually let them stay. He didn’t know why, but he got a bad feeling. Sergeant Kollner slapped Wessels on the shoulder a few times, making his legs rock. The inn owner winced as each hard, strong hand landed. He wasn’t built for such abuse. The soldiers all filed out of the Inn one by one.

— *Two hours later, 4 P.M.* —

Aigis, Frieda and Otto, all now 14 years old, were strolling down the dirt-paved road of the town. Otto had been in the mood for some nice warm bread, so he offered to take the girls over to it. They noticed the golden-helmeted soldiers standing around the town, either talking to civilians, entering and exiting stores, or hanging posters.

“Could one of them be your dad?” Frieda asked hopefully.

“No. He’s an infantryman. He doesn’t wear that type of helmet.” Otto replied, more casually than disappointed.

“I don’t think I’ve seen these helmets before,” Aigis commented. “They must be new.”

He led the two over to the bakery, the small cottage with a perpetual lush cloud of steam wafting from the chimney.

When the three reached the bakery, a soldier had just finished hanging a poster and marched off. Aigis carefully took the paper off the wall and brought it closer to read. It looked like a propaganda poster. On the poster was an evil wizard. His face was extremely wrinkled, nose was so long, it leapt out of the illustration, and the fingers were pretty much bones draped in skin. He was electrocuting an innocent family of four during a fun day on the beach.

“What is it?” Frieda asked. Aigis squinted her eyes.

“‘Beware of the Greenbloods in your area’.” She read out loud.

“What’s a Greenblood?” Otto questioned. Sounds of marching footsteps approached them. Another soldier, who had just exited the general store from a ways away, approached the three children.

“I see you’ve taken an interest in that poster.” The soldier, around 21 or 22 years old, spoke. His voice had an odd tone to it, like a mix of friendly, but serious at the same time.

“You’re looking for ‘Greenbloods?’” Otto asked, craning his neck up at the Golden Battalion soldier.

“Oh, forgive me,” The soldier apologized. “We’re searching for Psychokinetics. We give them more power by humanizing them, so we use the term Greenblood instead. Describes those unholy freaks a lot better.”

Aigis tensed up. Frieda did as well, and Otto stared at the soldier with a mixture of curiosity and wariness. Aigis tried her best to not let her tense fingers rip up the brittle paper of the poster. A few tense moments went by as the soldier stood there, smiling and silent. The man cleared his throat, snapping Aigis back into reality. She immediately answered him, trying to not sound guilty of anything.

“Oh. I see.”

“The Kaiser suspects that the Triple Entente are planning to utilize them against us in the war. Espionage, on the battlefield, trading secrets with the enemy, all attempts to collapse our great Empire.”

“What are you going to do with them once they’re found?” Aigis asked.

“That’s classified. All you children need to know is that if you see one, come to one of us to report. If you need to know how you can find one, refer to the other posters on that wall. Have a good day.”

With that, the young soldier marched off somewhere else. The trio examined the other posters that were strung on the wall of the bakery. One of the posters depicted a normal human towering over Berlin on fire, the citizens screaming. The top line of the poster read “GREENBLOODS MAY LOOK LIKE US, BUT DON’T FALL FOR IT” The bottom line finished, “TRUST THE WRONG PERSON, THE FATHERLAND WILL BURN ASUNDER.”

Another poster depicted a psychokinetic woman flying over a treacherous thunderstorm at the same time as an erupting volcano towering over a village. The top line, “KNOW THE SIGNS”. The bottom line, “FOR EVERY WEATHER DISASTER, A GREENBLOOD CLAIMS ANOTHER VICTIM”

A third poster depicted an evil-faced psychokinetic with an open wound on their arm, a green liquid gushing out. The top line read, “THEY DON’T BLEED RED LIKE YOU AND I”. The bottom read, “IF THEY CAN’T FEEL THEIR OWN PAIN, WHY WOULD THEY FEEL YOURS?”

The fourth and final poster depicted the Golden Battalion surrounding a psychokinetic in handcuffs. “REPORT ALL GREENBLOODS TO THE GOLDEN BATTALION. TOGETHER, WE CAN PROTECT OUR EMPIRE FROM THESE ALIEN THREATS.”

Aigis tried her hardest to tear her eyes away from the disgusting posters, but at the same time, couldn’t look away. The teachers, guardians, warriors that her mother read legends about every night were being depicted as these evil monsters who wanted to watch the world burn. She felt the bile rising in her stomach. The way the poster talked about them like they weren’t people, or like they didn’t have any feelings. It was like saying she wasn’t human. Or her mom wasn’t. Or Frieda.

“We don’t fl—” Frieda shouted before Aigis covered her mouth.

“Nothing to worry about!” Otto reassured. “We already know psychokinetics aren’t real. They’re just old legends, right?”

“Totally,” Aigis nodded nonchalantly. At least, as casually as she could present herself. She slapped Frieda’s back, prompting her to nod alone. “The Kaiser is crazy.”

“Don’t worry. Even if they are real, I’ll turn them over to the Empire without a second thought!” He declared, fist over heart. Even Frieda, who lived for Otto’s confidence and charm, felt that this time, it sounded a lot more sinister. Both girls’ feet felt the urge to step back, turn around and run far away from the unsuspecting red-headed boy. As he excitedly ran over to the bakery to get his soft, scrumptious bread loaf, Aigis and Frieda trailed behind him. Everything gold to them became a sign of alarm. A sign of an uncertain future.