

— *April 16th, 1917. Ruheplatz, 1:06 A.M.* —

Aigis laid in bed for a couple of hours. Wessels usually clocked out of the inn and went home at midnight, but it wasn't unusual for him to randomly pop back whenever he forgot something there. That usually happened up to 30 minutes after closing, so any time after 12:30 was fair game. Aigis peeked from under her covers and looked at Frieda's bed across the room. She was still fast asleep. Frieda was not a light sleeper either, so Aigis could sneak out of the room pretty easily. She carefully crept out of bed and slid out of her covers, planting her feet firmly on the floor. She took one last look at Frieda before leaving the room. She felt a little pang in her chest. This was the only thing Frieda asked for her birthday. Maybe she should've just stayed home. What were the chances the day Aigis chose not to go was the same day the Golden Battalion had to leave? It probably would have been safe to take that risk. But Aigis wasn't in a risky mood. No matter how hard she could've tried, eating Frieda's cake would have the taste of stale, burnt, and bitter bread. Sitting in that wooden torture device called a dining chair with the table cloth that smelled like moth balls. If those men lived another day, Aigis could never wash the sin embedded in her skin. All she needed to do was leave, kill them, and then come back home before sunrise.

Aigis slipped out of the room, tiptoed down the stairs and quietly slid through the front door. Ruheplatz at night obscured everything. Aigis couldn't see even past her own nose. The only source of light was the full moon. The wind whistled through the empty streets and houses. Not a single soul wandered around in the middle of the night, and Aigis was glad for that. No witnesses to what she was about to do. She reached the inn and hopped onto the silver ladder leading up to the hole in the roof. She took each step up the ladder slowly, to keep it as still as possible while making a minimal amount of noise. She made it to the top of the roof. Bending

her back, she crouched down and stepped onto the wooden rafter. Aigis looked down below to the one-room inn.

There they were. The Golden Battalion soldiers slept in their beds, still wearing their uniforms. Their pickelhaube helmets and Luger pistols sat on nightstands next to the beds. The Gewher rifles were propped up against the wall, just within arms reach of the soldiers. Aigis scrunched up her face in pure disgust. The sight of them with so much blood on their hands, yet they were fast asleep like babies, she had to fight off the urge to jump down and tear them limb from limb. But she had to wait. Even psychokinetics would be no match against a bunch of soldiers with loaded weapons.

Silently, she brought her hands together, and the sky blue mist formed in her hands once more. She kept the image of the men sleeping in her mind. They weren't even going to wake up. She opened her eyes. Her body felt weightless. She pushed the ball of mist towards the floor, which struck one of the soldiers in their beds. The mist spread across half of the room. Every single one of them woke up with a start and leapt out of their beds, immediately taking hold of their rifles.

"What was that?" One of them exclaimed, clutching his gun. Only five of the men jumped out of the way.

They were all wide awake now. Five of the soldiers still stood within the mist. The soldier in the middle looked at his hand. The skin began to peel and melt, like a bubbling marinara. He stared at his hand for a moment, before realizing what was happening. The other four soldiers near him jumped back. The skin on their faces also began to boil as well. Their primal screams ricocheted around the walls of the room. Aigis, staring from above, looked at the

men with complete indifference. She took no joy in their suffering, but also didn't feel a twinge of sympathy for them either. They deserved every last second of this.

The other five ran out of the inn's back door into the nearby woods. She couldn't let them get away. She leapt off of the wooden rafter down to the floor. She chased after them into the maze of trees as well. She saw four of them spreading out into different directions. The only thing on her mind was to hunt each of them down and make sure they all died.

Aigis stealthily crept through the dark woods, trying to sniff out the hiding cowards. No other sounds floated in the air, punctuating the few that rang out. The crackle of a twig. Rustling of leaves. Heavy breathing. Her head panned the environment, scouting for even the smallest change.

*SNAP!*

Aigis snapped her head behind her. One of the soldiers had his rifle aimed at her, preparing to strike. He stepped on a twig without realizing, betraying his hiding place. Aigis found a large rock nearby. With one hand, she used telekinesis to lift it and flung it at the man. The rock, the size of his entire torso, collided with his chest. The sheer force of the impact knocked him on his back and the wind out of his lungs. When Aigis crawled towards him to confirm whether or not he was dead, a searing pain rippled in her arm. She inspected the injury. Blood seeped through her blouse sleeve. She touched the spot and a jolt shot through her nerves. Whipping her head in the opposite direction, another soldier held his Luger P08 out, fresh smoke wafting from the barrel. He sniped her while she was distracted. She scowled at the man. With her uninjured arm, she used her powers to choke him. As he wiggled and squirmed to breathe, she lifted him up and slammed him against a tree head first. She then flung him into the open hole in the tree bark.

Aigis prowled through the night like a cheetah in a field full of gazelles. Nothing existed to her at this moment except for herself and the bastards who hung Otto. A few paces later, and another one jumps out and points his Gewehr at her. She looked to her feet and found a small pebble. She lifted it up and flung it into the barrel of his gun, jamming the mechanism. He frantically pulled the trigger, but the rifle wouldn't budge. He tried cocking the bolt, but it wouldn't move. He tried one final time to shoot, but the gun exploded in his hands knocking him to the ground. One left.

"Come out, you cowards!" Aigis screamed, her voice echoing in the woods. No response. She continued searching, keeping her eyes and ears open for any sign of movement. Aigis swore she could hear soft crinkling of leaves in the distance. She slowly approached the noise. Behind a tree, the last soldier standing hyperventilated behind the tree. He saw the enraged Aigis prowling around, looking behind every tree. It was only a matter of time before she found him. The panicking man pinched a single Mauser bullet. His Luger was still in the gassed hotel room, so he had no secondary on him. He only had one shot at this. After preparing himself mentally, he loaded the Mauser into his Gewehr and cocked the bolt. His breathing steadied. The world fell silent. Only one goal mattered: Survival.

He shut his eyes tight so he could see nothing but darkness. He peered out from behind the tree and pulled the trigger. The recoil from the rifle nearly knocked him to the ground. The soldier slowly opened his eyes. He wasn't even close to hitting Aigis. The bullet whizzed past her and landed somewhere else in the forest. But now they were locking eyes. And she started to approach him.

With no other options, the soldier gripped his gun tight and pointed it at the approaching Psychokinetic. He let out a guttural scream straight from his diaphragm as he charged at her, the

bayonet slicing through the night air. Aigis quickly sidestepped out of the way and the bayonet hit a tree. The soldier pulled it out and stabbed again, aiming right for her chest. Aigis kicked the rifle right out of his hands and knocked it a few meters away. His only defense against the rampaging Aigis was gone. He was a sitting duck.

Aigis did nothing to him at first. Her piercing blue eyes burned into the man's very core. He tried backing away slowly, but his legs buckled and he fell onto the ground. Aigis inched closer and closer as the pathetic soldier could only crawl away backwards on all fours.

"W-Wait! Hang on!" The soldier pleaded.

Aigis didn't listen. The soldier's back hit a tree. Aigis trapped him in.

"I-I'm sorry, okay? I'll give you anything you want! Just forgive me please! Have mercy!"

Aigis got into his face. "Did you spare Otto when you tied that noose around the tree branch? What about when he pleaded with you as he desperately gasped for air? Did you show him mercy then?"

"Have some humanity!"

Aigis lifted up her palm, preparing another magic attack.

"Nope. I'm just a Greenblood, remember? A dirty, filthy, subhuman Greenblood."

The soldier screamed for mercy. Aigis reeled back her hand, staring the man right in his eyes so she would be the last thing he saw. He shut his eyes, not wanting to know how he goes out. A few seconds passed. Nothing.

The soldier opened his eyes, wondering why he was still alive. Schultz got behind Aigis and struck her in the back of the head with the butt of his rifle. Aigis clung onto the back of her

head and winced. Besides Schultz, Sergeant Kollner approached. He looked down on the girl with disdain. Aigis flipped over to look at the angry soldiers towering over him.

“Well, well, well. I leave my men to get a good night’s rest, and this is what I come back to?” Kollner hid his hands behind his back. Schultz kept his rifle pointed at the Psychokinetic, daring her to make a move.

“I’m going to end this, sir.” Schultz declared, cocking the bolt on his rifle. Kollner pushed up Schultz’s Gewehr, stopping him.

“No. We’re not killing her.”

“What do you mean, Sarge?”

Kollner stroked his chin. “She may be of some use to us.”

Aigis glared up at the mustached officer with contempt, still clinging onto her throbbing head.

“I heard of this ability Psychokinetics have. You can sense whether or not your own kind is nearby,” He began, gesturing as he spoke. “Truth be told, we’ve been struggling in our mission to apprehend Psychokinetics within Imperial territory. And with the U.S. joining the war, the Kaiser is putting even more pressure on us. So we come to you with a proposition. If you agree to help us locate the other Psychokinetics, we shall spare your life.”

“And if I refuse?”

Kollner smiled, and Schultz pointed the bayonet inches from her face. “Then we kill you right here. So what will it be?”

Aigis looked at the two men sneering at her from above. She wanted to hock a loogie in their faces and swear that she would choose death rather than even think of being their accomplice. But then her mind drifted back home. If she got herself killed, Frieda would lose her

sister. Sure, she still had Irma, and her mother treated her well enough. But Aigis was her best friend. The same girl that slept in the same room, shared the same toys, knew cryptic secrets no adults would ever tell them. For Frieda to lose her only true friend left because of Aigis' rage and thirst for revenge.

Aigis sank her head, her hair hanging down. "Okay. You win. I'll join you."

Schultz lifted his gun and holstered it on his back. Kollner clapped slowly and chuckled.

"Good girl."