

— *April 15th, 1917. Aigis and Frieda's room, 10:40 P.M.* —

Aigis sat at the desk in her and Frieda's room, tracing her finger along the interior map of Wessels' inn. A single candle lit up her view as she closely monitored each part of the floor plan, specifically where the hole is in the ceiling. Her face was focused as she meticulously calculated her plan. Not even the sound of the door opening was enough to break her focus. Frieda, sticking her tongue out, covered Aigis' eyes.

"Frieda, I'm kind of busy right now." Aigis sighed.

"Guess who?" Frieda leaned forward to rest her chin on the top of Aigis head. The older sister rolled her eyes.

"The best little sister in all of Germany?"

"What's that? I didn't quite hear you." Frieda snickered cheekily.

"In all of *Europe*?"

Frieda moved her hands and got off of Aigis. Aigis turned around to look at her younger sister, who was in an even giddier mood than she normally was in. She wasn't mad at it. It showed she'd recovered from how she was a couple of years ago.

"Are you also excited for a very special day tomorrow?" Frieda smiled at her. Aigis returned the smile, but hers was much more reserved.

"The big seventeen? Of course I am." Aigis looked back at the map, but Frieda hovered over her.

"So! What'd ya get me?"

"It's a surprise." Aigis waved off and continued on her map.

“Tell me! I wanna know!” Frieda pouted and put her hands on her hips. Aigis raised a brow.

“You really want to know?”

“Give me something to be excited about!” Frieda whined and grabbed her shoulders. Aigis moved her body out of the way and gestured toward the map on the desk.

“You got me a map?” Frieda pouted, her eyebrows creating wrinkles in her forehead. “Just say you hate me, Aigis.”

“No, no. The map itself isn’t the present.”

Frieda crossed her arms. “So tell me.”

“You know that squad of Golden Battalion soldiers who came by all those years ago? The ones who killed Otto.”

“Go on.” Frieda followed along.

“They came back to the same inn. Where they sleep guilt free of what they’ve done.” Aigis’ voice became much more grave. Frieda stayed silent, but got a feeling she wasn’t going to like where this was going.

“So... What’s the present?” Frieda asked in anticipation.

Aigis’ blue eyes gazed into Frieda’s. “Revenge.”

Frieda smiled. She didn’t know why. But her facial muscles had already contorted. “What do you mean by ‘revenge’?”

“When they’re all sleeping peacefully in their beds, I sneak in and I kill them. Every last one of them.”

For some reason, Frieda started laughing. Aigis always had somewhat of a weird sense of humor. She thought this was a joke with an uncomfortably long setup. Aigis wasn’t laughing. Her

stagnant face made Frieda laugh even more. Eventually, she stopped, leaving her with a weird tingling sensation inside of her. Like a horde of spiders filled her interior.

Aigis began pacing around the room at an uneven speed. Sometimes, she walked slowly. Other times, it was a quick jog. But her waltz changed with no set rhythm.

“The plan is perfect. I spent days plotting it out, planning every detail. Wessels never repaired the hole in the roof, and he has a ladder on the outside I can use to get up. Wessels leaves the inn every midnight on the dot. And with some new magic I learned, I can take care of all of them in one fell swoop. Everyone will think a gas leak is what took them out.”

Aigis looked expectantly at the black-haired girl, hoping for a nod of agreement or even a smile of approval. Frieda kept her body still, but facial twitches gave away her true emotions.

“Are you okay, Aigis?”

Aigis smiled wider. To her, it was a gentle, warm smile. To Frieda, it came off as a malicious leer. “Okay? I’m better than okay. I’m fantastic! I can solve everything tonight!”

“But what if the Battalion catches you? They’ll kill you!” Frieda bit back.

“Not if I kill them first.” She sneered. Frieda became sick to her stomach. Aigis noticed the pain on Frieda’s face and grabbed onto both of her cheeks.

“Think about it. The German Empire isn’t going to punish those cowards for their crimes. Hell, they gave those bastards the Iron Cross. They REWARDED them for slaughtering a boy. If they won’t punish them, someone has to. You can finally rest easy knowing our poor Otto’s killers were brought to justice.”

Frieda gulped. “Aigis... You’re scaring me.”

The smile was wiped off Aigis’ face and she let go of Frieda. She didn’t even realize how tight her grip was. Aigis replayed her entire rant through her head.

“Frieda, I’m so sorry, I—”

“It’s okay. You’re probably exhausted.”

Aigis sighed and rubbed her eyes. She was so hard at work over the last week that she hadn’t allocated much time for rest. She didn’t feel tired, but maybe Frieda was right. Aigis sat down on her bed.

“Is there anything else you want for your birthday?”

“One thing. I just want to have a nice, peaceful birthday at home with my mom and sister. No drama, no carnage, no homicidal revenge plots, just family time,” Frieda gently confessed to her dead-eyed exhausted sister. “Can you do that for me?”

“Of course, Frieda. Anything for your birthday.” Her voice broke. Frieda pulled her in for a hug. Aigis stared off into the distance with Frieda’s shoulder resting under her chin.

The two sisters went to bed that night without saying much more to each other. Frieda fell asleep pretty quickly in the dark. Aigis, however, could not sleep. Frieda just wanted her big sister to be there for her special day. She could just listen to Frieda and keep her sister happy. She needed every small moment of happiness these days. But what if the Battalion left Ruheplatz tomorrow? No justice, no retribution. They continue on their hate-mongering, killing ways. Aigis looked at her hand. It blended in with the darkness a bit, but Aigis could still see it. Otto’s death was still her fault. It was her responsibility to make amends. She couldn’t let those men walk out of their town again. Not in one piece.