

— *January 8th, 1918. Selkefall, Anhalt, 11:20 A.M.* —

Frieda, after buying some new clothes, only brought a bindle with the Psychokinetic book that she saved from the basement inside of it. She spent a week traveling by foot to find a good nature place, with no civilization in sight. Surrounded by rich Aurae, this would be the perfect place to connect spiritually to nature, and to the potent life energy itself. She could feel the powerful energies surrounding her, as the trees were healthy, and the soil was rich. The sun was out, and the breeze was just enough to keep the air moving, and the winter air was not too chilly. She found an abandoned cottage not too far from the training site, although it looked like it hadn't been inhabited for about a hundred years.

She stood on top of a rock by the Selkefall waterfall. A stream was fractured into several tiny rivers by rock, which eventually flowed back together into the lake at the bottom of the falls. The water was clear and the sound of the roaring waterfall was relaxing. According to the book, in order to harness her own abilities, she would need to concentrate and believe that she can do whatever she put her mind to. To start off with something simple, she wanted to lift a rock using telekinesis. She closed her eyes and outstretched toward a rock about the size of her foot. Believe it, and the rock would float. It was the simplest of the exercises outlined in the book, and was the first one in the first chapter. She could do this. Frieda tried for a few seconds, then opened her eyes. The rock hadn't moved.

"Maybe I'm not manifesting hard enough?" She wondered aloud. She shook her head to empty out the doubts. Once more, she outstretched her hand and tried again. This time, audibly grunting, hoping the sound would somehow make a difference. She opened her eyes again. Still nothing.

“Come ON!” She shrieked, her voice echoing through the vast wilderness. How hard could it be to telepathically lift a rock?! Her father was Vergil Schumacher, and he was one of the most powerful Psychokinetics alive. She had to have the same power as Aegis, so this should be in her blood.

One more time. She planted both feet on the slick rock beneath her and threw both hands at the rock. From deep within her gut, she took a deep inhale and pushed out the loudest, longest scream she had ever mustered. She had her eyes closed, so she couldn’t tell what kind of progress she was making. At least until she ran out of breath and fell backward on the rock like a relaxed starfish. Her face became scarlet and she felt lightheaded from the attempt.

Then she heard something from a distance. Another person laughing. She propelled herself to sit up, looking for the source of the laughter. A strange boy was leaning against a tree across from the river she was standing in. The boy had blonde hair, hazel eyes, wore a coon skin hat and similar clothes to that of American pioneers. He held a knife in one hand, and an apple in the other. He seemed to be around 18, Frieda’s age.

“Am I interrupting something? I noticed you were... having a fit over there.”

Frieda hopped over the stones to meet the boy on that side of the river. “What are you doing here?”

The boy shrugged. “Taking my daily nature walk.”

“The closest town is kilometers away from here. How do you just end up here?”

“Dunno,” He shrugged. He took a bite out of his apple. “I just wander and see where the wind takes me.”

This boy was suspicious. It took Frieda days to wind up in an area far from civilization, and yet this boy shows up out of nowhere, with the excuse of a nature walk. Still, she was just

glad it was a boy her age and not a Golden Battalion soldier. Even if he was still admittedly a mystery.

“So,” He continued, swallowing what he was chewing. “What’s your name?”

Frieda hesitated, unsure if she could trust him. He didn’t look violent or like a spy. The most dangerous thing on his person was a knife, but he was using it to peel the skin off his apple.

“Frieda.” She finally disclosed, deciding to trust me.

“My name’s Lui.” He nodded. A bit of apple juice was dripping from his mouth.

“That’s not a German name.” She crossed her arms.

“It’s short for Ludwig. But I go by Lui. It’s easier. Snappier.”

She didn’t have a rebuttal for that. Lui took his fruit knife and started peeling the sides of his apple.

“So what’s a girl like you screaming at rocks for? Did you come out here cuz no one can judge you?”

Frieda turned her back on the boy, looking down the flowing waterfall. “I came here to practice a skill. It’s important that I learn it.”

“I see, I see.” Lui nodded, finding her story intriguing. He finished his apple, slow periodic crunches rhythmically beating. He walked up beside her, watching the waterfall along with her. Lui finished his apple, then proceeded to toss his core into the flowing water.

“Hey! You can’t litter in a river like that!” Frieda scolded.

“Who said I was littering?”

“You tossed trash in the river! What else would you call it?”

This made Lui chuckle to himself. “That apple core was once a part of nature. The way I see it, throwing that core into the river is recycling it. Now it becomes one with the earth again.”

Frieda put her hands on her hips. “To me, that sounds like an excuse for littering.”

Lui, gaining a cheeky smile, stepped to the edge of the river. He twiddled his fingers like an evil mastermind. “You really care that much about the apple core?”

“I just don’t want you trashing this river. I need that life energy.”

“Then go get it!” He laughed, pressing both hands on Frieda. Her foot slid off the slick rock and she fell into the freezing cold freshwater. It was mid-January, so the already-chilly water was even more numbing. She emerged from the water, gasping for air. Lui was hysterical, pointing at the drenched Frieda. Her bangs were drooping over her eyes, making her look like a soaked dog. Her hair was now as heavy as a towel, and the light dress she wore weighed down like a hundred tons. She could barely stand, her feet sinking in the slippery river bed. She had to lift her dress in order to have clear footing.

“You look like a wet dog!” He cackled.

“That’s not funny!” She grunted.

“It is to me.” Lui giggled.

“It’s the dead of winter! I’m going to get sick because of you!”

“Relax,” Lui finally calmed down with a soft breath. Nobody’s going to get sick from falling into a river.

Later that night, Lui sat on the grass near a feverish Frieda, who glared daggers at him. Lui found a bunch of leaves to make into a makeshift blanket. All Lui had to say in response to being wrong was,

“My bad.”